

Editor arrested on charges of slandering Saddam

AMMAN (AFP) — The editor of a Jordanian weekly was arrested and placed in custody for two weeks on Wednesday pending trial on charges of slandering Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the newspaper's publisher, Jamal Muhtaseb, told AFP. Mr. Muhtaseb said the Press and Publications Department had launched legal proceedings against Ali Odeibat for "disturbing Iraqi-Jordanian relations and slandering Saddam Hussein in addition to an unnamed leader of a foreign country." The Sawt Al Maraz newspaper ran a headline comparing the Iraqi president's sweeping victory in a referendum on Oct. 15 to landslide election victories by the late Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat. It is the second such case in a month. Two journalists from Al-Bilad weekly were arrested in mid-November on slander charges. King Hussein has repeatedly criticised the press in Jordan and the government has indicated that it plans to amend the current Press and Publications Law to impose stricter penalties for such charges.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز بومية تليفونية نصتو بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرائي.



The Orientals for Travel & Tours

Shmeisani, Abu El-Hameed Budees St.
(Sight & Sound St.) opposite Al-Qasr hotel.

Tel : 683859 Fax : 683876 Mobile: 079-22207

Volume 21 Number 6096

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, DECEMBER RAJAB 22-23, 1416 14-15, 1995,

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Ex-Yugoslav leaders sign peace deal in Paris today

Contact Group, OIC 'determined' on Bosnia

OYAUMONT, France (Agencies) — Foreign ministers from the major powers and eight Islamic countries emerged from meetings at a medieval abbey here Wednesday resolving to protect and maintain Bosnian stability on the eve of the Paris treaty signing ceremony.

The declaration followed a day of meetings at a stately 13th-century abbey set in quiet woodland north of Paris, held to iron out final details of the U.S.-brokered Dayton accords.

Hundreds of French police were mobilised to ensure the politicians' security, with security forces on alert throughout the French capital for tomorrow's signing ceremony, Paris police headquarters said.

The Royaumont Abbey meeting brought together countries from an enlarged "contact group" on Bosnia — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the U.S. plus Canada, Italy, Spain and the European Commission — and a similar association from the Organisation of Islamic

Conference (OIC). The eight OIC states — Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Turkey — had met earlier in closed session.

The combined group expressed the need to "reconstruct a unified Bosnia, which respects the diversity of its communities, and sovereignty within internationally recognised borders, with Sarajevo as its capital."

The talks also concerned possible practical measures to reassure Serbs in Sarajevo who fear the deal may force them from their homes and who voted in a referendum on Tuesday against the peace deal, French spokesman Yves Douriaux said.

French diplomats have been working on a deal on progressive mutual recognition by Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro and are hoping it can be unveiled before Thursday's ceremonies.

Such a deal, long sought by European mediators, would lower tensions and help stop the Balkans sliding back into war. It would also represent a diplomatic coup for Paris, which has taken a back seat to the United States in peace negotiations.

8 Saudis killed in road accident

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Eight people were killed Wednesday in a road collision on the Azraq-Omar highway, police and Civil Defence Department (CDD) officials said.

The crash, the seventh worst road accident to be reported in the Kingdom this year, like many before it, was the result of speeding and driving on the wrong side of the road, traffic officials said.

According to police, the accident occurred at 8:30 a.m. near Sbamari Wild Life Reserve. It involved a vehicle bearing Saudi Arabian licence plates carrying eight Saudi Arabian passengers, and a Jordanian truck going to Omar.

Police said the driver of the Saudi vehicle, who was coming from Omar to Azraq, was speeding and driving on the wrong side and met head-on with the truck on a two-lane road.

"The strong impact caused the instant death of the eight passengers and the complete wreckage of the Saudi car," a police official told the Jordan Times. The driver of the truck, Khalid Khalil Hassan, 27, suffered minor injuries, he added.

The deceased were identified by officials as Abdul Hamid Abdullah, 41, the driver of the vehicle; Yusef Muhammad Ali, 46; Yusef Muhammad Issa, 62; Abdullah Ali Ahmad, 62; Saleh Mohammad Hussein, 67; Abdullah Mohammad Hussein, 62; Ramadad Ahmad Amiri, 52; and Hassan Mohammad Shehnan, 51.

The bodies were taken to Zarqa government hospital. Wednesday's accident was the seventh worst road accident to be reported on the Kingdom's highways this year. On Oct. 15 four

people were killed and eight were injured on the Irbid-Huson highway when the double-cabin pick-up truck they were riding slammed into an oncoming military vehicle.

According to traffic statistics, almost 400 people were killed and 9,000 injured in more than 24,000 road accidents between the months of January and September of this year.

Tabariti heads for Bosnia signing

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Tabariti on Wednesday flew to Paris to attend the official signing of the peace accord that will end the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. He is accompanied by Omar Rifai, head of the Foreign Ministry's special office.

King congratulates Arafat over Israeli pullout; Majali to head observer team

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday congratulated Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for taking control of West Bank towns following an Israeli withdrawal from part of the territories occupied since 1967.

In a telephone call to Mr. Arafat, King Hussein also pledged that Jordan would maintain its support for the Palestinian people until they achieve their national objectives.

The King said the withdrawal of Israeli forces from West Bank towns and villages was an "achievement which can only corroborate the peace process and bring hope for the people of the region for further prosperity, security and stability."

The Israeli army withdrew from Nablus late Monday after similar pullouts from the West Bank towns of Jenin and Tulkarm. The Palestinians are due to take control of other towns by the end of the year.

Also on Wednesday the Jordanian government formed an 11-member delegation to join a team of international observers monitoring the Palestinian elections expected to be held on Jan. 20, 1996.

The delegation will be led by former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and will group Senator Abdullah Salah, Parliament members Mohammad Daoudieh and Mohammad Thweib as well as Awad Abu Obeid from the Foreign Ministry, Mislch Tarawneh, Saleh Juncidi, Mukhaimar Abu Jamous, Walid Shawkat Abeda and Karim Naber from the Interior Ministry and Salameh Ekour from the Ministry of Information.

Dr. Majali had led the Jordanian delegation in peace talks with Israel that led to the signing of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty in October of 1994.

Israeli, Syrian signals raise hopes for peace

Peres is reportedly also proposing interim agreement over S. Lebanon

Combined agency dispatches ISRAEL AND SYRIA on Wednesday raised expectations of a breakthrough in their stalled peace talks as U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher headed for the region with new ideas to jump-start the negotiations.

"I have no doubt here, and I am even totally convinced, of all my being, that there will be a breakthrough and we will achieve peace" with Syria, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said.

Mr. Peres, who spoke on Israel Radio on his way back from Washington, added: "I can't guarantee an exact timetable, in one year, in three years."

Syria also sent encouraging signs on Wednesday, saying the peace process is moving into a new phase following "new and important proposals" from Mr. Peres.

Egyptian Foreign Minister proposal to raise peace talks to the level of foreign ministers.

"If the Israelis make a good offer (to the Syrians), that will mean negotiations will take place at a higher level," Mr. Musa told the Arab "daily Al Hayat."

He said Israel "talked about foreign ministers or even a higher level" for the resumption of direct peace talks.

"This possibility exists," but Syria's agreement depends on developments in the peace process and U.S. efforts," Mr. Musa said.

No joint chamber with Israel

EL AVIV (Petra) — Jordan's Ambassador to Israel, Jarwan Muasher on Wednesday denied reports that the Israeli press that a Jordanian-Israeli chamber of commerce has been set up. He explained that Israel had set up its own chamber of commerce designed to encourage economic ties with Jordan. In a press statement the ambassador said that Israeli business community had set up such a chamber to trade and promote trade with Jordan. Israel has been accustomed to establishing chambers of commerce in order to promote trade exchange with other countries, he noted. Dr. Muasher said that while Jordan welcomes the formation of the Israeli chamber which will benefit Jordan's economy, it should be known that no joint chamber has been established between Jordanian and Israeli business communities. Dr. Muasher, who met with the Israeli chamber's members, said that there was need to stimulate Israeli trade with Jordan and launch joint ventures with Jordanian business people because such endeavours would help promote the trade.

1 killed in Romanian plane crash

ERONA, Italy (R) — A Romanian airliner crashed while attempting to land at Verona's Villa Franca Airport Wednesday, killing all 11 people on board, the Italian news agency ANSA reported. ANSA quoted fire

fighters as saying the plane had crashed into a field near the airport.

The plane was carrying 11 passengers and two crew members. The cause of the crash is still under investigation.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday joins tribal leaders from the Karak region in a traditional dance as part of celebrations marking the 60th birthday of His Majesty King Hussein (photo by Boghos)

Jordan's biggest challenge is in developing its resources — Prince Karak tribes celebrate King's birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday attended Karak Governorate's celebrations of His Majesty King Hussein's 60th birthday held at the residence of Senator Habes Majali in Ghor Thiraa area.

Prince Hassan delivered a speech in which he stressed Jordan's resolve to counter all challenges facing it.

He said Jordan's main challenge was to develop its resources, mainly its human resources, and prepare the youth to shoulder their responsibilities in a sound manner.

"King Hussein's words recently, that Jordan is for Jordanians and that Jordanians are for the Arab Nation sum up what comes to one's mind when visiting Ghor Thiraa and Al Safi."

Prince Hassan told participants in the celebration, recalling the sacrifices of the Jordanian army for Palestine. "In 1968 on Al Karamah (battle) day and in Al Safi, I remember how this blessed land was destroyed by war and aggression. I also remember the (Jordanian) Arab Army's stands... and I remember recently travelling by car from West Jerusalem to Tel Aviv through Latroun Valley and Bab Al Wad, on the sidewalk in Abu Ghosh village seeing Israeli army machines destroyed in the war of 1948 at the hands of the fathers and grandfathers in the Arab army, the army of the founding father," Prince Hassan added.

Iran faces tougher American sanctions

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The Senate Banking Committee has unanimously approved legislation to tighten sanctions on Iran by punishing foreign as well as U.S. companies that buy Tehran's oil and gas.

The panel voted 13-0 Tuesday for the measure aimed at ratcheting up the pressure on other countries to deny oil revenues to Iran, which the United States accuses of supporting international terrorism.

An aide to Republican Senator Alfonse D'Amato, the banking committee chairman who co-sponsored the legislation, said the full Senate could pass it by the end of the month. The House of Representatives has yet to consider it.

The measure would go farther than has President Bill Clinton, who early this year issued executive orders barring U.S. companies and individuals from dealing with Iran.

But the White House said Tuesday it welcomed the bill. "In its present form we back it 100 per cent," said a White House official who added that officials had been negotiating with the committee on the wording of the bill.

The legislation could lead to a confrontation with major U.S. allies such as Britain, France, Germany and Italy, whose companies are eager to do business with Iran's oil programme.

But the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the approved measure answered any reservations the White House had previously had.

"What concerns we did have on those grounds were taken care of," he said, adding that the White House

was now confident that the measure would be passed.

Iran's oil exports to the United States are valued at about \$10 billion a year.

Christopher, King to study follow-up to MENA summit

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is expected to visit Jordan next week as part of a visit that is primarily aimed at revitalising the Israeli-Syrian track of peace talks, and in Amman he will discuss with His Majesty King Hussein means to follow up on the proposals discussed at the Amman economic summit on regional economic development.

Mr. Christopher, who begins the visit to the region late Thursday or early Friday after the signing of the Bosnia peace accord in Paris, is expected here Sunday or Monday after talks in Israel and in Syria.

The secretary of state will also visit Egypt as well as Jericho, where he will meet with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters in Washington on Tuesday that Mr. Christopher intends to "renew the dialogue (for peace) and to revitalise it, to see how much progress can be made in the coming months."

His goal is to have thorough and comprehensive discussions with all parties, but particularly with the Syrian and Israeli leadership...

In Amman, Mr. Christopher will exchange views with King Hussein on the peace process and also "about how we can follow up" on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit held in Amman in October "to build greater support for regional economic growth and stability," the spokesman said.

Mr. Christopher and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown led a 150-strong American official and private sector team to the Oct. 29-31 summit and took active part in some of the deliberations of the summit. Their presence was seen as a reaffirmation of the Clinton administration's commitment to economic development of the Middle East region through supporting the private sector.

One of the key issues for discussion between the King and Mr. Christopher is expected to be American military assistance to Jordan, an issue, according to reports in the Israeli press, which was

ADVERTISEMENT

On the occasion of its Thirty Second anniversary, Royal Jordanian Airline, has the pleasure to announce the introduction of a new service to facilitate the check-in process for passengers. Effective December 15th, 1995 passengers travelling to Amsterdam, New York, Chicago, London and Berlin will have the choice of obtaining their BOARDING PASS as well as paying airport departure tax at our sales office located in Housing Bank Commercial Centre. This service will be extended to

Iraq continues to resist partial oil export offer

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Iraqi deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said on Tuesday Baghdad continued to reject a Security Council resolution permitting limited oil sales to buy humanitarian supplies.

"No, there is no change. The main concerns that were raised by Iraq during the discussion of that resolution and after its adoption by the Security Council still stay," he said after meeting the council president, Sergei Lavrov of Russia.

Referring to Iraq's objections to stringent U.N. monitoring of any partial oil sales as a violation of its sovereignty, he added: "As long as these concerns are not solved properly, we cannot change our position."

Asked whether Iraq would accept the oil sales plan if the conditions contained in the April 1995 resolution were changed, he replied: "This is hypothetical. Up to now I have not been informed by any responsible source in the council that there has been any change or that there will be any change. And as long as there is no change, there is no change also on our side."

Under Security Council Resolution 986, Iraq would be allowed to sell up to \$2 billion worth of oil over six months in order to buy food and other civilian goods for its sanctions-starved economy. The sanctions, including a ban on oil sales, have been in force since Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Aziz is visiting New York to lobby council members and others to ease the sanctions in advance of a report which the council is due to receive around Dec. 15 from the head of the U.N. Special Commission in charge of scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Rolf Ekeus.

Mr. Aziz said he briefed

the council president about "the great progress that has been made in our relations with the special commission since the events of August."

That was a reference to the defection to Jordan that month of Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel, former mastermind of Iraq's clandestine weapons programmes.

The defection prompted Iraq to give the U.N. Special Commission a vast quantity of new information which it claimed Gen. Kamel had kept secret even from the Iraqi authorities.

Iraq cannot hope to see any easing of the sanctions, including the ban on regular oil sales, until the U.N. commission certifies that all its nuclear, chemical, biological and nuclear programmes have been destroyed and that ongoing monitoring ensures it does not reacquire banned arms.

Mr. Aziz said he told the council president that "our relations with the special commission during this period have been constructive, professional, and we did all our best to clarify all the matters that were raised in August and later."

He also informed him that he had been able to fill a great number of the gaps, answer a great number of the questions that were raised since then.

Mr. Aziz also dismissed charges by the United Nations and others that it had tried to obtain forbidden weapons systems even while subject to sanctions.

He rejected recent reports that parts for missile guidance systems bound for Iraq had been impounded at Amman airport by the Jordanian authorities, adding: "These are allegations. They have not been proved. They were caught outside Iraq, so we do not bear any responsibility about that."

"It is not our intention to do such things and it is absurd to think that Iraqi authorities would import material for missile production while all the missiles have been destroyed since 1991 and while all the Iraqi industry is under full control and monitoring by the special commission."

The reports "were fabricated the day I declared that I am coming to New York, and you know these tricks," he added, implying the aim was to hamper his efforts to get sanctions lifted.

Sandis firm

The U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq has strengthened the government of President Saddam instead of weakening it, the former Saudi head of the Gulf War allied forces said Wednesday.

"At the start, the idea of the embargo was to free the Iraqi people and weaken the ruling power. But five years later the reverse has happened and that has strengthened the regime," said retired General Khalid Ben Sultan after talks with President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo.

"The embargo has not had the desired effect and we have to look for an alternative," he added, saying he was not opposed to a lifting of the sanctions.

Gen. Ben Sultan said any alternative to the embargo "must come from the United Nations and the United States, the only super-power in the world."

"There was an intervention to save the Somali people and provide them with food. Why don't we think of something else to save the Iraqi people?"

He headed a force in the January-February 1991 Gulf war included the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Egypt and Syria.

Karaki defends government's handling and state media coverage of impact of tremors in Aqaba

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of Information Khaled Karaki on Wednesday defended the government's policies and media coverage of the series of earthquakes that hit the Kingdom recently and said that the government did not force any official or citizen to distort facts.

Dr. Karaki was replying to a comment made by Islamic Action Front Deputy Bader Riati lashing out at what he described as the government's lack of attention and consideration to the negative effects of the earthquakes especially on Aqaba citizens.

"People were psychologically traumatised. There were numerous cases of abortions and several families spent their nights in tents despite the bitter

cold," Deputy Riati said. "The earthquakes are continuing and the people are living in terror."

Several earthquakes hit the Kingdom, the Aqaba region in particular, in the past weeks. The strongest registered was 6.2 on the Richter Scale.

"I have been in Aqaba when the earthquakes occurred and I've seen how much people were terrified. I wished that the media would give the right directives to the people. But instead the TV was busy broadcasting horse racing live from Aqaba."

Deputy Riati also criticised the government's procedure, including the formation of committees to help citizens. The panels are "not qualified enough," he distributed

fact sheets were "not useful," Mr. Riati said. Foreign students were moved to another school for their protection while "no one paid attention to the ordinary citizens," he said.

Dr. Karaki replied that the government had been following all details about the earthquakes and had not forced any official to distort facts.

"Minister of Energy (Samih Darwazah) has been following the issue. Everything that was said through the media was broadcast from Aqaba itself," Dr. Karaki said.

"We have discussed the situation with scientists and we talked to the civil defence. We did not put words in anyone's mouth to force him to say something that was not true, he said."

However, "we tried to make the media as compe-



Khaled Al Karaki

tent as possible... we tried not to wreak havoc within the community," he said. "What happened is a lesson for us on how to deal with natural disasters, if God forbid, anything of the sort happens again."

Two killed in attack on Mogadishu police station

MOGADISHU (AFP) — At least two gunmen were killed and three others were wounded when heavily armed men supported by two technicals (armed wagons) attacked a police station at K-4 in south Mogadishu on Wednesday morning, sources close to General Mohammed Farah Aideded said.

The sources said the attackers were trying to release two lorries which had been detained by Gen. Aideded's security forces in Merca district, 100 kilometres south of Mogadishu, after accusing them of violating tax regulations imposed by Gen. Aideded's United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance faction government.

Sources close to Gen. Aideded's militia and police claimed the detained vehicles were transporting military hardware to Gedo region controlled by the Marehan sub-clans' Somali National Front (SNF) opposed to Gen. Aideded.

The military cargo was confiscated and handed over to Gen. Aideded's government, but the faction's regulations allowed the owners of the lorries and cargo to repurchase them from the government if they still needed them.

But one of the owners of the detained vehicles, Issa Odah, denied the claim, saying that they were transporting non-military materials and imported food stuff to Gedo region.

Mr. Odah also said he did not know when or who imposed sanctions on Gedo region, since Gen. Aideded's "government" had not officially declared any sanctions against southern Somalia's Gedo people.

But police investigators maintained that some of the businessmen who were behind the armed attack on the police station had earlier admitted that they were transporting communication equipment, including field radios, which could be used for militia purposes, although they maintained they were for private and domestic use.

Habr Gedir clan elders intervened after the attack and calm has since returned to south Mogadishu.

Meanwhile, Gen. Aideded's militiamen and those of self-styled interim Somali president Ali Mahdi Mohammad's Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA) clashed on Tuesday night on the road between Mogadishu and Ballidogle. Gen. Aideded's faction confirmed on Wednesday.

The clashes followed the massing of 25 technicals by Gen. Aideded's faction in the area in an effort to reopen the road, which has been closed for the past few days due to clan militia fighting.

They said that during the battle, both sides used anti-aircraft missiles and heavy machineguns, but Mr. Ali Mahdi's militiamen later retreated into surrounding villages and jungles to reorganise.

Two days of heavy rains in the area have prevented Gen. Aideded's armed wagons from pursuing the retreating militiamen.

The fighting followed Mr. Ali Mahdi's warning on Tuesday that Somali national and foreigners should immediately stop using two airports controlled by Gen. Aideded's faction at Ballidogle and K-50.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Franco-Palestinian aid accord is signed

PARIS (AFP) — A Franco-Palestinian aid agreement worth 75 million francs (\$15 million) has been signed in Paris, with most of the money earmarked for the port of Gaza, French officials said Tuesday. The protocol was signed Monday by Palestinian and French finance ministry officials, and follows a financial protocol last year that was worth 60 million francs (\$11.3 million). "The Gaza port is one of the projects on which France wishes to help in Palestine," the French finance ministry said. Palestinian sources confirmed that most of the new protocol will cover construction of the Gaza port, the sole maritime outlet for the autonomous Palestinian territories. Initial plans call for building a small port to handle vessels of less than 10,000 tonnes, although it could be enlarged at a later stage.

Libyan boat fires on Tunisian fishermen

TUNIS (AFP) — A Libyan patrol ship fired on a Tunisian fishing boat seriously wounding one of the fishermen on board, daily newspapers reported here Wednesday. The Libyans opened fire Tuesday after a gust of wind blew the Tunisian boat with three men on board "inadvertently" into Libyan territorial waters in the Mediterranean Gulf of Gabes, said the Assabah and Temps de Tunis dailies. The Libyan boat ordered the trawler to head for a Libyan port, the papers added without giving further details. There was no official comment on the incident, the first to be recorded in a long time by local media.

Norway protests Israeli shelling in Lebanon

OSLO (AFP) — Norway protested Tuesday against Israeli artillery fire that wounded three of its soldiers on duty with United Nations forces in South Lebanon at the weekend. In a statement, the foreign ministry said the Norwegian government had asked Israel to "ensure that such incidents do not happen again." It was the third time that such an incident had occurred in south Lebanon, it said. In one of the previous incidents, in December 1993, a Norwegian soldier serving with the U.N. Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was killed. The Norwegians hit by the latest shelling were part of a motorised unit on a routine patrol near the village of Blatt, a few kilometres from the town of Marjayoun, overnight on Saturday.

EU gives Egypt \$12m for family planning

CAIRO (R) — The European Commission said on Wednesday it had granted Egypt 10 million ECU (\$12.66 million) to fund family planning programmes in impoverished southern villages. The commission's Cairo office said in a statement the grant would cover training doctors and setting up clinics in the Qena and Sohag governorates as part of a five-year 258 million ECU (\$326.6 million) development grant pledged by the EU in 1991. Egypt is one of Africa's most populous nations. Official statistics put the population at 60 million and the birth rate, particularly among the country's poor, is high.

Greek APCs arrive in Cyprus

NICOSIA (R) — Eighty-four Greek-made Leonidas armoured personnel carriers (APCs) arrived in Cyprus by sea on Tuesday night, a Defence Ministry spokesman said. The cost of the deal has not been revealed. The purchase of the APCs is part of a four-year armament programme undertaken by the National Guard of Cyprus to boost its defence capabilities. Last year another 50 Leonidas APCs arrived for the Greek army contingent on the island. Eighteen BMP 3 infantry fighting vehicles have been delivered from Russia since September as part of a \$68 million deal to acquire 43 such vehicles.

PNA voter registration 'impresses' monitors

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The European Union (EU) observers mission said Tuesday it was "impressed" by the voter registration process for the first Palestinian general elections which are due to take place on Jan. 20.

"We have been favourably impressed by the registration process," Sweden's Karl Lidbom, head of mission, told a Jerusalem press conference. "We note that it has been very well-prepared and that the implementation of this large-scale and complex operation has been carried out efficiently and correctly," he said.

Mr. Lidbom said the one-month process had taken place "in the unusual circumstances of military occupation and partial withdrawal" of Israeli troops from the West Bank.

Around 1.1 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including annexed East Jerusalem, have been registered.

Mr. Lidbom pointed to some weaknesses, such as that adequate maps were not always available to the door-to-door canvassers, but said

"the number of potential voters affected... is so low as to have no significant validity."

He also noted a late rush in East Jerusalem, where registration was extended, "to overcome some reluctance to register among the Palestinian population of the city."

A point of concern for the EU observers' chief was that the late ratification of the election law, last week, had left only a short time for election candidates and parties to come forward.

Registration to contest the elections is due to start on Thursday, he said, adding the law itself was already being amended and that this could lead to confusion.

Mr. Lidbom also urged the Palestinian authorities "to draw up promptly clear and fair rules to regulate access by candidates and political entities to the broadcast and printed media."

Three hundred EU observers as well as 200 from other countries and international organisations are to be deployed for the self-rule elections. A first contingent of some 60 Europeans arrived last month.

Palestinians remove settler booth near Orient House

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Angry Palestinians destroyed a booth built by Jewish settlers outside the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) headquarters Wednesday, saying it incited violence against Arabs.

"We don't need this intolerance. We have to clean up this city and we don't need more racism and incitement to violence," said Palestinian human rights lawyer Jonathan Kuttub after some two dozen youths ripped down the booth and scattered its posters.

Jewish settlers set up the booth across from the Orient House in East Jerusalem this summer to press their demand for its closure. The booth was only sporadically occupied and there were no Israelis there on Wednesday.

The Palestinians flipped over a cabinet full of Jewish prayer books and trampled posters saying "peace is kill-

ing us" and "Orient out." Spray-painted on a nearby wall was the slogan "Death to the Arabs."

Israeli border police dispersed the crowd and temporarily detained one of the Palestinians.

"So what," said Moshe Feiglin, a Jewish extremist-right leader who set up the booth. "We can rebuild it tomorrow. That's not the fight. The fight is over Jerusalem. The (Israeli) government is giving away the city to the Arabs."

Also Wednesday, police detained Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a founder of the West Bank settler movement, after he refused a court summons to appear in court. He was convicted on Monday of assaulting Arabs five years ago but was freed pending an appeal.

Police hauled him in after he refused to post bail. He has 43 days to file the appeal.

Israel and Syria have no option but peace — Savir

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Israel's top coordinator for the Middle East peace process declared here Tuesday that "peace between Israel and Syria will happen" because the two feuding neighbours do not have a better alternative.

Uri Savir, director general of the Israeli foreign ministry, stressed, however, that peace with Syria must include "a credible security arrangement" as well as agreement on such major issues as water.

He also denied that his country had asked for a "strategic treaty" with the United States.

Mr. Savir, who was described as the architect of the Israeli peace efforts with the Arabs, was speaking at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He is in Washington accompanying the new Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres, who reportedly spelled out in talks Monday with President Bill Clinton his vision for a Middle East peace once Israel signs a peace agreement with Syria.

Mr. Savir reminded his audience that the Palestinian issue, nevertheless, remains at the heart of the Arab-Israeli peace process.

The top Israeli official said that he was struck by the fact that a leading American

newspaper did not carry on the front page the news of Mr. Peres' working visit to Washington or the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the largest Palestinian town in the West Bank — a development, he continued, that could not be imagined a few years ago.

He went on to say that Syrian President Hafez Al Assad must be challenged by the change under way in the Middle East as a result of the unfolding peace process.

He also acknowledged that Israel saw peace with Syria only in security terms, looking at the "quality of peace," while the Syrians for their part saw peace in a territorial dimension only.

Despite the "fundamental change" under way in the Middle East (he noted that nine Arab states were represented at Yitzhak Rabin's funeral), the "basic hostility" that exists between Syria and Israel needs to be weeded out, according to Mr. Savir.

Once peace is achieved with the Arab World will be attained. He denied that this was a slogan in order to win over public opinion — "this is not just to sell peace with Syria."

Mr. Savir said he had no idea when the talks with Syria will resume but he said that

the decision will be made in light of the visit this weekend by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Damascus and Tel Aviv.

When a questioner asked him about the American role in the anticipated talks, noting that the U.S. was absent in the agreements reached with the Palestinians and Jordanians, Mr. Savir appeared indignant.

He said the peace accords with the various Arab parties could not have been reached without an American role. He stressed that the significance of the American role was the absence of an American solution to the issues, thus leaving the matter for the parties.

Mr. Savir said he expects a larger American role in the outcome of the talks with Syria.

The Israeli official said he was also struck by the absence of any questions from the high-powered audience on the Israeli-Palestinian track, noting that there was a "success story" in the making. He expressed confidence that the Palestinians will be capable of building their own society.

He observed that the Palestinians on Dec. 28 will only be accountable to their authority and on Jan. 20 they will be electing their own legislative council.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:00 This — The Happy Professor
13:15
13:25
13:50
14:10
14:30 The New Leave it to Beaver
15:30
16:30
17:00
17:30
18:00
18:30
19:00
19:30
20:00
20:30
21:00
21:30
22:30
23:59

PRAYER TIMES

05:00
06:00
11:30
14:14
16:37
18:00

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Switzerland, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul 898140
Dr. Jamal Juraiah 847351
Dr. Abdul Hadi Toyrim 620115
First pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nairokh pharmacy 626272
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shimoon pharmacy 637660
Nairokh pharmacy 626672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qasbi 281741
Al Quds pharmacy (-)
ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Lawzi 898601
Khalid pharmacy 985417

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 2/14
Aqaba 9/20

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police (92, 621111, 637777)
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 723121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 628900
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) (21)
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 771111
Water Authority 660100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power

Company 634381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 81381/352
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 6428416
Akikah Maternity, J. Amn 6424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muhsen Hospital 6672219
The Islamic, Abdali 6661277
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajira 7710103
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafiah 77511126
Army, El-Marke 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:20 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:20 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Jeddah, Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:20 Colombo (RJ)
10:25 London (RJ)
10:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
10:55 Athens (RJ)
11:05 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
11:30 Jeddah (RJ)
11:35 Cairo (RJ)
12:05 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:05 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:30 Beirut (RJ)
12:00 Paris (RJ)
12:05 London (RJ)
12:15 Athens (RJ)
12:50 Larissa (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:35 Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 Cairo (RJ)
22:05 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:50 Beirut, London (BA)
07:45 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain, Muscat (GF)
13:30 Algiers (AH)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
14:40 Istanbul (OT)
17:15 Dubai (EK)
21:10 Cairo (MS)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/500
Banana (Mukammar) 620
Banana (imported) 870/630
Cabbage 110/50
Carrot 300/200
Cauliflower 110/50
Cucumbers (large) 150/100
Cucumbers (small) 300/200
Eggplant 300/120
Garlic 540/400
Grape Fruit 230/150
Lemon 150/100
Marrow (large) 280/200
Marrow (small) 200/140
Onion (dry) 230/170
Orange 260/180
Pepper (hot) 260/180
Pepper (sweet) 250/180
Potato 250/180
Radish 150/80
Spinach 120/80
String Beans 520/400
Tangerine 280/200
Tomato 210/130

FOR THE TRAVELLER

AMMAN:

Husseini Medical Centre 81381/352
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 6428416
Akikah Maternity, J. Amn 6424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muhsen Hospital 6672219
The Islamic, Abdali 6661277
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajira 7710103
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafiah 77511126
Army, El-Marke 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199



ANNUAL DINNER: The British-Jordanian Society (BJS) held its annual end of year dinner at Forte Grand Hotel under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein deputised for the Crown Prince, saying that Britain and Jordan have always maintained very strong historical relations based on common interests and values. Major events have occurred in the Middle East region since 1984 when the society was established, Prince Faisal said. Despite Jordan's involvement in these events, the society has maintained close contacts with the United Kingdom which has a special place in the hearts of the Jordanian people, he said. Prince Faisal said strong relations are needed now at a time when a new Middle East order is being built. Guests included Society President Mohammad Keilani and British Ambassador to Jordan Peter Hinchcliff and a number of deputies, senators and members of the business community in the country (Petra photo)

House turns down request for maternity leave extension of six months

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A demand by one parliamentarian to extend maternity leave from three months to six months was voted down by the majority of the Lower House of Parliament which saw the implementation of the extension as unrealistic. The request, made by leftist deputy Bassam Haddadin during the House's discussions of the amended draft of the public security law, was criticised by parliamentarians and government officials who described the amended draft which had already extended maternal leave from 40 days to three months, as sufficient. "Maternity is fully protected by the law," said

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdel Ra'ouf Rawabdeh.

"If the duration was extended then employers would not hire women...women will be deprived of their essential rights," Mr. Rawabdeh said.

"In addition, women employers have the right to four years' leave without pay," he said, adding, "the law is very well balanced out."

Islamic Action Front deputy Bassam Emoush also protested against Mr. Haddadin's proposal, saying the economic situation is already difficult enough.

"Three months' leave is already enough," Dr. Emoush said. "We should not be as emotional as lawmakers. Instead we should

be looking at the economic situation in the country."

Leftist deputy Mustafa Shuneikat and centrist deputy Hashem Dabbas also said that 90 days of maternity leave were enough and that this amount of leave is in line with all other laws and legislations.

The amended draft was adopted with no revisions.

Mr. Haddadin's proposal to extend maternal leave to six months was finally turned down with only two deputies voting in its favour: Mr. Haddadin himself and deputy Abdul Baqi Jammo.

Deputy Toujan Faisal, the only woman deputy, was absent from Wednesday's session.

Deputies protest price hikes, point to high level of poverty, low increases in salaries

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Lower House of Parliament deputies Wednesday protested against price hikes and called on the government to increase wages and take appropriate measures to fight poverty in the Kingdom.

Centrist deputy Mifleh Ruheimi complained against what he described as the injustice in the distribution of food coupons.

He said that while the House had already classified poor families as those who receive a salary less than JD 500 a month, and are entitled to food coupons, there are many poor families who are being denied these coupons.

"As soon as the Ministry of Supply started applying this policy, the distribution of coupons to needy families became an objective hard to achieve," deputy Ruheimi said.

"Which rules did the ministry follow in its classification of deprived and needy families?" he asked.

Opposition deputies complained of price hikes to the government saying that increases in employees' salaries is necessary.

Islamic Action Front deputy Suleiman Sa'ad said he received numerous complaints from Jordanians who were angry at the government's recent decision to increase salaries by only JD 10 as of June 1 of next year.

"This increase is marginal and does not help in anything," deputy

Sa'ad said. "In addition, the increase should start at the beginning of January and not in May as the government has decided."

"I call on the government to reconsider this decision," he added.

"The increase in salaries should also correspond to price hikes and the high costs of living," deputy Sa'ad added.

Leftist deputy Mustafa Shuneikat pointed out that price hikes have added an additional burden on the shoulders of needy families and has increased the level of poverty in the Kingdom.

"Some studies show that prices of more than 50 commodities have increased recently," he said. "The prices are increasing at a crazy rate without any monitoring or supervi-

sion."

"I call on the House and the government to adopt a very serious and firm stand to put an end to these increases," he said, adding, "attending to the needs of the public is our national duty."

The government did not make a reply to lawmakers' complaints.

The draft budget is, however, currently being discussed by the House's financial committee.

When referred to the House for endorsement, the draft budget is expected to draw criticism and debate from opposition and centrist deputies, particularly in connection with salary increases and the economy.

EC suspends Med-Media interaction programme

AMMAN (J.T.) — The European Commission has decided to suspend for six months the Med-Media programme which was earlier set up by the Commission to encourage cooperation and interaction among European news organisations and their Mediterranean counterparts.

An official at one of the Med-Media sponsored projects said in a letter faxed to the Jordan Times Wednesday that the decision was taken by the vice-president of the European Commission, Manuel Marin.

The official urged publications in the region to rally against the decision to suspend the programme by sending letters to the European Commission to explain the damage that would result from cancelling Med-Media.

"We regard the commission's decision as incomprehensible and very damaging to relations with all our partners in the eastern Mediterranean...where does it leave the rhetoric of Barcelona?" said the project official, adding that "we will continue to fight the decision."

RJ registers 4.6% passenger increase

AMMAN (Petra) — The national air carrier, Royal Jordanian (RJ) transported a total of 1,180,678 passengers during the past 11 months, reflecting an increase of 4.6 per cent over the same period of last year, according to RJ Assistant Deputy Director for Planning Ghada Bader. Ms. Bader said the number of passengers transported by the airline in November increased by 19.4 per cent when compared to November 1994. She said cargoes transported by RJ during the same period this year totalled 61,023 tonnes with an increase of 23.6 per cent of last year's figure.

Tawjihi examination to return to 'one session a year' basis

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministry of Education Secretary General Izzat Jaradat announced Wednesday that after this scholastic year tawjihi examinations will no longer be held in two sessions.

Dr. Jaradat said the ministry will return to the end of year examination session in the next scholastic year.

Dr. Jaradat made the announcement at a meeting for directors of government schools in Jordan during which he reviewed the ministry's plans for the first session of the tawjihi examination which is due to start on Dec. 27 and which will be sat for by more than 80,000 students.

Later, Dr. Jaradat chaired a meeting by

the ministry's planning committee to discuss textbook supplies.

He told the committee that the timely publication of textbooks for next year should be given priority and that everything possible should be made to avoid failure to meet deadlines.

Dr. Jaradat also called on the departments of education and school directors to hold regular meetings to discuss school plans particularly for the secondary stage and to explain arrangements for the new tawjihi examination arrangements.

Ministry looks to World Bank for assistance in housing projects for low-income groups

AMMAN (J.T.) — In efforts to allow limited income groups build their own homes at reasonable costs, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment is approaching the World Bank for assistance to set up a real estate mortgage market, according to Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs Nader Thuheirat.

The minister told the Jordan Times that he discussed the idea Wednesday with a visiting delegation from the World Bank.

A real estate mortgage market would permit low and limited income groups to obtain loans for their housing projects, he said.

Also discussed with the delegation was the subject of encouraging the private sector in executing low-cost housing projects for limited and low-income groups, an endeavour which until now has been shouldered by the Housing and Urban Development

Department (HUDD), the minister said.

The ministry is in the process of restructuring the housing sector in Jordan and in the next stage it will be encouraging people, especially those in rural regions to build units vertically rather than horizontally in order to not lose arable land, the minister added.

Mr. Thuheirat said he explained to the delegation that by executing development projects in rural regions and helping to create jobs and by making housing projects feasible to local citizens, his ministry was encouraging people to continue living in their own villages.

A three-day workshop on encouraging the private sector to carry out housing schemes for limited income groups held last week ended with representatives of the private sector announcing their willingness to take up the task but also requesting that they

be granted incentives and privileges from HUDD.

One study has recently shown that Jordan is in need of 32,000 housing units annually to cater to the continual growth in population.

Mr. Thuheirat said Jordan has been witnessing a population growth rate of 4.35 per cent annually. Population figures stand at 4.1 million at present, doubling six-fold since 1952.

HUDD plays a pioneering role in serving limited income groups but the private sector's contribution is now also needed, he said.

Mr. Thuheirat said his ministry was currently revising a law on organising towns and villages enacted in 1966 with a view to catering to the present requirements of the country.

Workshop to explore media's role in gender issues

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Media should play a vital role in changing preconceived roles of women in society, experts said Wednesday during a two-day seminar on gender and the media.

Jamilch Abu Duhou, a trainer from the West Bank, said media is an integral tool in social structure changes because it affects beliefs and ideology concerning gender issues.

Ms. Abu Duhou, who was addressing journalists participating in the seminar, said the purpose of the seminar was to introduce gender concepts to journalists in order to help them relate the concept to their work.

Ms. Duhou said the meet-

ing, organised by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), will expose participants to the practice of work that is free of gender bias.

"We are going to discuss gender and how it affects men and women, as well as values, standards and ideas and how they affect our general understanding of these values," Ms. Duhou told the Jordan Times.

During the five-hour seminar, Ms. Duhou pointed to the changing role of women in the society and in response to a question whether women were imitating men, she said: "We do not want to imitate men; we want to develop our roles in society."

The media is instrumental in the evaluation and

emphasis of the roles that women and men have been placed in, she said.

Leila Deeb, UNIFEM project coordinator, said the concept of gender is essential to the promotion of women's status in the region, "because seeking equality in all aspects of life and mainstreaming women into those aspects particularly in the economy and political participation is what will advance and enhance their status," she said.

Ms. Deeb asserted that to clarify this to and through the media is essential in order to dispel biases in gender concepts, to correct the image of women in the media and to avoid discrimination against them.

One of these require-

ments, she pointed out, is to update and advance the Civil Status Law, which can only come through public pressure.

She stressed to the participants of the workshop that gender is not only about women "but is about both men and women", explaining that gender is concerned with the deeply embedded concepts of the roles of men and women in society.

"Gender is very important in the development planning of both men and women and must be taken into consideration when planning development projects for the society," she asserted.

She hoped that the participants will understand the concept and implement it in

their profession to the advantage of a clear and common understanding of people.

Participants from various media sectors discussed and exchanged points of view on the misconceived roles of women and men in society, the social and professional forms of discrimination against them, and the laws which work against women.

Participants also watched a short film entitled "Impossible Dream", a short film which showed the social and domestic pressures of married women.

According to Ms. Duhou, Thursday participants will look at the media's role in gender issues.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

- * "Todos a la Carcel" and "El Milagro de Navidad" (for children) respectively at 4.30 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. on Thursday at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman.
- * "Monet: Legacy of Light" (with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Khaled Khreis) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 5.30 p.m.
- * "Advice and Consent" at the American Centre on Thursday at 5.00 p.m.

LECTURE

- * Information session on CPA qualifications and the Becker preparatory course at Forte Grand Hotel on Friday at 4.00 p.m.

POETRY RECITAL

- * Recital of poems (in English) covering topics on peace, democracy, and religious tolerance by Ibrahim

Mohammad Amin at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 6.00 p.m.

* Recital of poems by Laila Mahmoud at the Phoenix Gallery, Gardens St., on Thursday at 6.00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Works by artist Hind Nasser at Darat Al Funun (until Jan. 6).
- * Photography by poet Ibrahim Nasrallah entitled "The Autobiography of an Eye" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. (Until Jan. 4).
- * Photography exhibition "Biblical Itineraries" at the French Cultural Centre. (Until Dec. 30).

CHRISTMAS SALE

- * Gifts and crafts by Suha Lallas Kassieh (includes Christmas items, table mats, baskets, wall-hangings, candle-holders and side-lamps) at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra Street (until Dec. 31).

Exclusive yet affordable

TURINO
CLUB RESTAURANT

Street Side Italia
... Saturday 16 Dec. 1995

GALA DINNER

- * Video Clips from Italy, Rai (1) & Rai (2)
- * A gastronomy popular fair of Italian Pasta made to your order.
- * Your choice of main course to follow: Any Chicken, Veal or Fillet of Beef.
- * Including dessert & coffee.

JD 12:500 +

Sweifiyeh - Tel: 863944

AMRA FORUM HOTEL

SHEHRAZAD
The Ultimate in Middle Eastern Cuisine

A Majestic Experience
Oriental Atmosphere
Exclusive Hospitality

Enjoy Live Arabic Entertainment
Open nightly from 7:30 p.m. - midnight, except Fridays
1.90 cover charge

Dudayev warns war 'not over' but backs down on terrorism

SOUTHERN CHECHENYA, Russia (AFP) — The war in Chechnya is "far from over", separatist Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev warned Wednesday though he said he opposed terrorism as a weapon against the Russians.

In a rare interview, the former president of Chechnya denounced Russian-organised elections in the republic this week as a "farce".

The fighting is "far from over. It has only just begun," he told reporters at a secret location in southern Chechnya.

However, the leader of the Caucasus republic's independence movement, said he would not order terrorist acts, contradicting threats made by several of his top guerrilla army commanders.

"I am a professional soldier and I am opposed to terrorist warfare," he said.

"War is not a bomb on a train or an explosion in the subway. ... War and terrorism are two separate things. War has its own rules and whoever breaks those rules has already lost," he said.

Mr. Dudayev, whose forces continue to battle Russian troops in pockets in mountainous southern Chechnya, said the Russian-organised local leadership elections, set for

Thursday, were "a plain farce".

Mr. Dudayev, a former Soviet Air Force general, who as president unilaterally proclaimed independence from Russia in 1991, has called for a boycott of the elections, in which the only well-known candidate is the Dokku Zavgayev, the Russian-installed interim leader of Chechnya.

Former Russian Parliament Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov withdrew earlier this week claiming the vote was a sham, and the two other two candidates are unknowns who have been known to use their free television time to praise Mr. Zavgayev.

Mr. Dudayev also repeated that he rejected an accord signed Friday by Mr. Zavgayev and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin that recognises Chechnya as having a special status within the Russian Federation.

"We are not familiar with the text, and frankly, we don't plan to become familiar with it," he said.

"We are preparing the signing of a new agreement — on the status of Russia within Chechnya," he joked.

Russian troops stormed Chechnya on Dec. 11 last year to crush Mr. Dudayev's

independence movement.

Most tolls estimate that around 30,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

Mr. Dudayev, who been in hiding since being driven out of the Chechen capital earlier this year, appeared in fine health and good humour as he received reporters shortly after midnight Tuesday-Wednesday.

Future peace talks are necessary, he said, but "we will probably have to wait for a change in power in Russia, because the current regime is not qualified for anything."

Russia abandoned peace talks with the rebels in October after a bomb that left the Russian military commander in a coma.

Mr. Dudayev's forces have denied responsibility for that attack.

Mr. Dudayev said that Russian parliamentary elections Sunday, in which Communists and nationalists are expected to perform well, were unlikely to make peace talks any easier.

"The democrats have all deserted. ... There is only a tiny group left, desperately beating against the stones of the Kremlin walls to break open a hole in this totalitarian regime," he said.

Only two or three democratic parties are competing and "the rest are ... fascists

and rejects from other parts of the country that have washed up in Moscow," he said.

He blamed the "international community" for a series of wars in the former Soviet republics.

Mr. Dudayev also said that after Russian troops were finished in Chechnya, they would "swoop down on Europe and slaughter you like chickens".

Russian troops stormed Chechnya on Dec. 11 last year to crush Mr. Dudayev's independence movement. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the fighting.

On Tuesday the Chechen parliament brought the elections forward by three days to Thursday, Inter-Tass news agency reported.

The poll had originally been scheduled to take place to coincide with the Dec. 17 Russian legislative elections.

Mr. Zavgayev, who was appointed by Moscow, decided the poll would take place throughout the republic between Dec. 14 and 17, Inter-Tass said.

In the poll, the rebel republic will elect deputies to the Duma (lower house of the Russian parliament) as well as electing a head of the Chechen Republic.



Singer Michael Jackson waves to fans as he walks out of Beth Israel North Hospital in New York after recovering from a serious illness (AFP photo)

Michael Jackson leaves N.Y. hospital

NEW YORK, (R) — Fans cheered as pop star Michael Jackson was released Tuesday from a New York hospital where he had been treated for a life-threatening viral infection that caused him to faint on stage.

Jackson, 37, was released after spending six nights and seven days at Beth Israel North Hospital after fainting on the stage of the Beacon Theatre while rehearsing for a Home Box Office (HBO) special that was to have been shown Sunday.

Promoters indefinitely postponed the show called "Michael Jackson: One night only". It was estimated the show would have drawn a worldwide audience of 250 million.

As a white van carrying Jackson left the hospital grounds, more than two dozen fans ran after it, shouting "Michael, Michael, we love you." Jackson, who waved to them as he got into the van, wore a long dark overcoat and a fedora hat and was surrounded by several aides and a doctor.

His doctors said in a statement: "Mr. Jackson's health has improved to the point that he can be released. He will still require several days of bedrest and close monitoring by his medical team as an out-patient over the next several weeks."

In the hospital, Jackson received thousands of cards, letters, faxes and gifts from fans. His doctors said last week that he might have died had he not received prompt medical attention when he fainted during rehearsal for the show with French mime Marcel Marceau.

The doctors said the fainting may have been caused by an irregular heartbeat combined with dehydration and the severe viral infection. The hospital said Jackson's heart was normal.

The illness is a blow to Jackson who has been trying to rebuild a career that suffered from 1993 allegations he molested a 12-year-old boy. Jackson denied the charges, settling with the boy out of court for a sum estimated to be as much as several million dollars.

The cable show would have been his first appearance since the release in June of his album "History-past, present and future, book I" which sold 1.7 million copies in the United States and 8.5 million worldwide, disappointing by his standards.

Filipino killers apologise for 'innocent' victims

MANILA, (R) — A since the mid-1980s, said Ty was shot because of his "heartless and pernicious" attitude towards his workers.

It said he had failed to ensure adequate safety measures at his Manila Paper Mills Inc., leading to several employee deaths.

It said Yu's "crimes" included union-busting and violence both towards individuals and workers manning picket lines.

"Let these actions serve as warning to all abusive capitalists. They should now mend their ways and treat their workers with justice and fairness," the ABB statement said.

It said it would investigate the killing of innocent victims and that disciplinary action could be taken against its members.

The ABB, whose most prominent victims included U.S. Air Force Colonel James Rowe, usually kills just one target at a time, often corrupt police and officials.

Its last victims included two senior Filipino police officers who had been acquitted by a court of kidnapping charges.

In a separate statement, the ABB, named after a labour organiser killed by the military under the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, said it was not deliberately targeting Filipino Chinese.

"We want to assure our Filipino-Chinese compatriots that our policy of friendship and cooperation with their communities remains unchanged," it said.

His mother was wounded but the family's host, Ramon Chua, was not in the car at the time of the attack.

The ABB, notorious for dozens of Manila killings

Panel urges moving Japan's capital by 2011

TOKYO (R) — A 30-year-old idea to move Japan's capital away from crowded Tokyo finally boiled down to a set of conditions and a 2011 timetable Wednesday, but there were no details on location or cost.

A government committee called the capital relocation panel said in its final report that a new capital must be built from scratch somewhere between 60 and 300 kilometres from Tokyo and 40 minutes travelling time from an airport.

The site must be decided by the end of 1997 so the first phase of construction can begin by 2001, the report said.

In the first phase, parliament, the prime minister's residence and office, as well as cabinet members' offices and policy-making branches of ministries will move.

By 2011, the report said, parliament should be able to convene its inaugural session in the new capital. The panel did not discuss whether the emperor would take up residence in the new capital, officials of the national land agency said.

The panel urged parliament to enact a law to establish a selection committee of experts to decide the location of the new capital by the end of 1997.

Since 1603, when Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa founded his Samurai government, Tokyo, originally called Edo, has mushroomed from a tiny frontier fishing village to the capital of modern Japan.

Greater Tokyo, including suburbs and satellite cities, is now home to 30 million people, a quarter of Japan's population, and is uncomfortably close to major earthquake fault lines.

After a devastating earthquake levelled the city of Kobe in western Japan and killed more than 5,000 people in January this year, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama asked the panel to speed up its process. Its final report was moved up to Wednesday from next March.

The report is expected to boost sentiment about the economy at a time when Japan is suffering from its longest recession since the immediate postwar period.

It does not give an estimate of the cost, but private economists have said the first phase — moving parliament and government — would require a minimum direct investment of 14 trillion yen (\$138 billion), roughly a fifth of Japan's annual state budget.

The panel report ruled out hilly country, earthquake-prone areas and regions without additional water supplies sufficient for an eventual population of 600,000 people in the new capital, said panel Chairman Osamu Uno, head of Kansai Federation of Economic Organisations in Osaka, western Japan.

There must be enough land, about 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres), for the initial phase, the panel said.

Nine local governments and business groups have nominated themselves as candidates to provide the site of the capital.

North of Tokyo, the candidates by prefecture are the Abukuma River Valley in Fukushima, the south of Miyagi, Nasu in Tochigi and central Ibaraki.

To the west of Tokyo, they are the Lake Hamana area in Shizuoka, eastern Gifu, the Lake Biwa area of Shiga, and a "capital belt" straddling southern Nagano, southern Shizuoka, eastern Aichi and Mie.

Farther afield, the city of Tomakomai near Sapporo on the northernmost main island of Hokkaido has also been nominated.

Emma Thompson wins award for 2 films

NEW YORK (R) — British actress Emma Thompson won the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures' best actress award for her performances in two movies in 1995, the group announced. Awards in 10 categories will be presented to the winners on Feb. 26 next year at a dinner in New York. Thompson was voted best actress for her performances in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Carrington*. The film, *Sense and Sensibility*, based on the Jane Austen novel of the same title, won the best film of the year award. The board, established in 1909, named American actor James Earl Jones as recipient of its career achievement award.

Hootie, Boyz II Men top award nominations

LOS ANGELES (R) — Two of 1995's highest selling acts, Hootie the Blowfish and Boyz II Men, grabbed five nominations each in the 23rd annual American Music Awards, organisers said Tuesday. A mixed bag including pop-punk trio Green Day, country rocker Garth Brooks and self-proclaimed "king of pop" Michael Jackson landed three nominations apiece. The awards will be handed out on Jan. 29 at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium and the event will be shown that night on ABC. Nominations for the 21 categories were unveiled at a news conference Tuesday attended by the show's hosts, comics Jeff Foxworthy and Sinbad, and its creator, Dick Clark.

Phantom Of The Opera's greatest fan strikes again

NEW YORK (R) — The greatest fan of Phantom Of The Opera has struck again, buying every seat for Tuesday's performance of the Broadway hit for the second year in a row. Long Island resident Daniel Leber, 48, bought out the performance and donated the tickets to charities to raise \$1.1 million. Mr. Leber, 48, a self-made millionaire, says he did it because Dec. 12 "is the most exciting day in my life. I met my wife, Remy, at a showing of Phantom on Dec. 12, 1988. I proposed to her on the same date in 1992 and our wedding was the following December," he said.

Sinatra turns 80 his way

LOS ANGELES (R) — Frank Sinatra, one of the most revered crooners ever, celebrated his 80th birthday — without any of the wild parties that marked his earlier anniversaries. Instead, the man known affectionately as "Ol' blue eyes" was spending a quiet day at home and planning a family dinner with his wife of 19 years, Barbara, to mark the milestone. While Sinatra did it his way, his fans across the nation celebrated anyway.

Elton John ruling to curb British libel payouts

LONDON (R) — Big libel awards could become a thing of the past in Britain after an appeal court ruling which slashed what it called "manifestly excessive" damages awarded to pop star Elton John. The British singer won damages in 1993 totalling £350,000 (\$537,000) over a newspaper article that said he was suffering from the slimmer's disease bulimia nervosa. Three appeal court judges cut the award to £75,000 (\$115,100) and said that, in future, judges in libel cases should guide the jury on how much to award in damages.

Space-age Australian gun set to revolutionise anti-missile technology

SYDNEY (AFP) — U.S. arms manufacturers want to evaluate a revolutionary electronic gun designed by an Australian inventor that can fire at more than 20 times the rate of the world's fastest existing gun.

The super-weapon, dubbed "Metal Storm," is being viewed as the first really effective defence against guided missiles such as the cruise missile as well as mortar bombs and even smart bombs, its inventor, Mike O'Dwyer, said Wednesday.

The gun is reported here to have taken the arms industry by storm after being fired in Queensland University trials at up to 135,000 rounds a minute, and demonstrating a capacity to fire at more than 10 million a minute.

America's fastest machine gun, the Phalanx anti-missile gun which equips U.S. warships, fires at a maximum rate of 6,000 rounds a minute.

Metal Storm, prototypes of which have been built by Australia's Olympic rifle gunsmith, Mah Engineering of Brisbane, has taken 10 years and cost just \$1.1 million to reach its present stage of development — an almost negligible sum in defence procurement terms.

It is electronically controlled, has multiple barrels and an infinitely variable rate of fire, but no mechanical moving parts, no opening breach and no movement of ammunition from the magazine.

Mr. O'Dwyer, a former retailer who retired from his successful business to concentrate on his numerous inventions of which the gun is only one, has no scientific or ballistic background.

Yet his patented technology is to be studied by three leading U.S. arms manufacturers under secrecy agreements and Australia's Defence Science and Technology Organisation also wants to appraise it, the Australian newspaper reported.

"Not having a ballistic background enabled me to think laterally without being embarrassed about what I was thinking about," Mr. O'Dwyer told AFP.

"I set out to produce a weapon that threw more lead than existing technology because when I looked at existing technology just as a curious inventor, it seemed to me that for all the complexity there was not much lead coming out."

After studying the existing technology, Mr. O'Dwyer decided it was impossible to improve further. "It was a matter of going back to the 14th century and starting again," he said.

The new concept weapon he designed was taken to Mah Engineering after he was advised by ballistics and Australian military experts that they had seen nothing like it before.

Chinese Wei jailed for subversion

BEIJING, (R) — Wei Jingsheng, China's leading pro-democracy campaigner, was found guilty Wednesday of conspiring to subvert the government and jailed for 14 years in what analysts called a "shocking" warning against dissent.

Widely regarded as the father of China's modern democracy movement, Mr. Wei was also stripped of his political rights for three years — but spared a possible death sentence.

The official Xinhua news agency called the verdict a "first ruling" by the Beijing Intermediate People's Court, leaving open the possibility of an appeal. "He has 10 days from tomorrow to appeal," a court spokesman said by telephone. It was not known if Mr. Wei would do so.

Analysts interpreted the sentence as an intensification of government curbs on dissent but said it also revealed a lack of confidence in the Communist Party leadership.

"That's quite shocking. They (the government) must be extremely nervous about dissent," said a veteran China-watcher in a European embassy. "There must be a very complicated situation going on inside that Communist Party in which they want to show internally that they are very hard and not yielding to foreign pressure."

The trial was the first public appearance by China's best-known dissident since

he vanished into legal limbo in April 1994 after meeting a senior U.S. Human Rights official.

Mr. Wei had spent much of his adult life in prison but spoke out anew against one-party Communist rule during a half year of freedom that ended with his disappearance in April 1994.

It was not clear whether the 14-year sentence, if upheld, would include the 20 months he has already spent in state custody, court spokesman Chen Xiong said.

Another western diplomat cast doubt on rumours in diplomatic circles that Mr. Wei might now be sent abroad for "humanitarian" medical treatment to get him out of China once and for all.

"Why should they? The Chinese do not care," the diplomat said. "He will be locked up and just appear on the list of foreign human rights bodies."

The foreign ministry has denied planning to expel Mr. Wei. At the five-hour trial, Mr. Wei spoke in his defence as did lawyers Zhang Sizhi and Li Huigen. Details of the subversion charges and Mr. Wei's defence were not available, Mr. Chen said.

Mr. Wei's relatives attended the trial as did some Chinese reporters and court-selected citizens, several dozen in all, Mr. Chen said.

Western reporters were denied access. His relatives

have denounced his prosecution, saying Mr. Wei did nothing but exercise his constitutional right to speak his mind and never posed any threat to the state. They were denied access to Mr. Wei until Wednesday's trial.

The United States and other western governments have urged Mr. Wei's release, condemning his trial as political persecution. A U.S. embassy spokeswoman said she was unsure if the verdict would affect a planned trip by a senior U.S. Trade official, Lee Sands, who was due in Beijing Wednesday. "This trip has been scheduled for a long time. I wouldn't necessarily link the two," she said.

In Washington on the eve of the trial, U.S. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake told Mr. Wei's sister, Wei Shanshan, the United States and President Bill Clinton were deeply concerned about the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize nominee.

The 46-year-old veteran dissident was first jailed in the late 1970s democracy wall era after proposing that senior leader Deng Xiaoping's four modernisations drive needed a fifth component — western-style multiparty democracy.

Much of his imprisonment was spent in solitary confinement. Under strong international pressure for his release, China paroled Mr. Wei in late 1993 after he had served all but six months of a 15-year prison term.

Castro urged to take reforms to political sphere

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama Wednesday urged Cuban President Fidel Castro to extend his economic reforms to the political sphere including human rights, a Foreign Ministry official said.

During a 20-minute meeting with Mr. Castro, who arrived here Tuesday on his way home from a two-week tour of China and Vietnam, the official said Mr. Murayama welcomed the Caribbean nation's recent economic reforms.

But the prime minister also noted that the world trend was towards greater democracy, "many countries are making such efforts. I hope Cuba will accelerate democratisation with due consideration for human rights," he said.

Mr. Castro, who abandoned his trademark military fatigues for a Vietnamese suit on his first visit to Tokyo, replied that Cuba was "among those countries making their utmost efforts for world peace," the official said.

The Cuban leader then blamed the United States for making "unreasonable" criticisms of Cuban policy.

"It's up to you whether to believe what the United States is saying," he told Mr. Murayama, recalling that "before the Vietnam War, the United States was supporting countries practising apartheid and genocide."

The United States also dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki," the Cuban leader added.

The two leaders seemed to agree on the need to reform the United Nations, with Mr. Murayama noting that it "should change so all members' opinions are reflected" recent changes in the world.

Mr. Castro replied that it was "undesirable" for the Security Council to be dominated by nuclear powers. "The United Nations should change so that more opinions from Latin America and Asia are reflected," he was quoted as saying.

The Cuban leader reportedly told Japanese lawmakers earlier that he had turned down an unofficial invitation to visit North Korea, the world's last Stalinist stronghold.

U.N. calls for end to nuclear testing

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The U.N. General Assembly has called for an immediate end to nuclear tests in a resolution aimed at France and China.

But the vote of 85 to 18 with 43 abstentions Tuesday was less than expected, particularly in comparison to a preliminary vote last month of 95 to 12 with 45 abstentions.

France, lobbying against an international outcry against its resumption of nuclear testing, was able to get Francophone African states to vote against the measure and persuade some Central American and Caribbean nations not to vote at all.

But Paris was unable to change any votes among its 15 European Union (EU) allies, 10 of whom supported the measure, Spain, which holds the current EU presidency, had asked member states not to vote against France.

The resolution, which did not mention France and China by name, "strongly deplors" current nuclear testing and "strongly urges" an end to all nuclear tests. It was sponsored by about 40 countries, most of them in the Pacific or Latin America as well as states such as South Africa and Norway.

France has staged four nuclear tests in French Polynesia in the South Pacific since September, fulfilling President Jacques Chirac's vow to conduct a final series of checks on nuclear arms before ending tests forever. Two more blasts are planned before the end of February.

China conducted two tests this year, the first one within 24 hours after the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) was extended indefinitely in May.

In Canberra, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, whose country was a prime mover of the resolution, told reporters the vote was a "little disappointing."

"There was obviously a lot more arm-twisting done by the French government toward Francophone former colonies in Africa," he said. "It was always going to be difficult to get a resounding, thumping great majority in the U.N."

France's Ambassador Alain Dejammet called the text of the resolution "unfounded, unfair, pernicious and pointless."

None of the five acknowledged nuclear powers voted in favour of the resolution. France, China and Britain voted against while the United States and Russia abstained.

Among the Western Europeans, only Britain sided with France by casting a negative vote. Ten others — Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden — supported the resolution while Germany, Greece and Spain abstained.

After a vote in the General Assembly's Disarmament Committee on Nov. 16, France reacted promptly against Europeans who supported the resolution by postponing a Franco-Italian summit and calling off other high level meetings in Belgium and Finland.

The countries which voted against the resolution in addition to France, China and Britain were: Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Monaco, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

S. Korean prosecutors arrest close aide to Roh

SEOUL (R) — South Korean prosecutors arrested a close aide of former President Roh Tae-Woo Wednesday, charging him with bribery in connection with a multi-billion dollar arms build-up, a prosecution official said.

Kim Chong-Whi, Mr. Roh's former chief secretary for security and foreign affairs, was charged with receiving 80 million won (\$104,000) from U.S. firm Asia Europe America and 50 million won (\$65,000) from Kim Woo-Chong, chairman of South Korea's giant Daewoo Group.

The prosecutor, speaking by telephone, gave no details of the U.S. company. He also gave no indication of the link between the charges and the military build-up.

Mr. Kim left for the United States two months after Mr. Roh left office in February 1993. He arrived in Seoul Monday and went immediately to the prosecutors office to be grilled.

His departure had coincided with the start of an official investigation into the "Yulgok" project, a codename for the huge military build-up on which Mr. Roh's government spent an estimated \$18.2 billion.

Mr. Roh is under detention, indicted on charges of accepting \$369 million in kickbacks from 35 business conglomerates.

An investigation into "Yulgok" has centred on a decision taken during Mr. Roh's term to buy 120 F-16s from General Dynamics, reversing a plan to purchase F-18s from rival McDonnell Douglas.

Meanwhile, another ex-president, Chun Doo Hwan, was in his 11th day of a hunger strike at Anyang Prison.

"He hasn't eaten any food today, too. He drinks only barley tea," said a Justice Ministry official.

News reports quoted Mr. Chun's lawyer Lee Yang-Won as saying Mr. Chun had lost about 10 kilograms but did not want to be taken to hospital even if he collapsed.

"There is no need for me to go to hospital because I will be returned (to prison) again. There is no political purpose behind my fasting. I will not leave here even after I collapse," Mr. Lee was quoted by the Korea Times as saying.

Mr. Chun, who ruled with an iron fist from 1980-88, was arrested and detained on Dec. 3 on mutiny charges stemming from a 1979 coup he led. He is expected to be indicted by Dec. 22.

On Monday, prosecutors probing alleged shady deals behind the war plane purchase, interviewed Kim Yong-Ho, vice president for the Seoul office of Lockheed Martin.

General Dynamics was mostly acquired by Lockheed Corp, which merged with Martin Marietta earlier this year to form Lockheed Martin. Mr. Kim, who headed General Dynamics in Seoul at the time, has denied any unethical activity.

Mr. Roh has confessed to amassing a \$654 million slush fund while in office and keeping \$342 million.

Prosecutors were still pondering Wednesday how to get a third ex-president, Choi Kyu-Hab, to give his version of events surrounding Mr. Chun's December 1979 grab for power. Mr. Choi was caretaker head of state at the time.

He has refused a summons to appear before prosecutors, and when prosecutors went to his home Tuesday he refused to give away any of his secrets.

"We had thought of getting him to testify in court, but if he is not talking now, will he do so then?" another prosecution official said.

Lebed's party calls for united front to change constitution

MOSCOW (AFP) — Two leading Russian nationalists called Wednesday for a coalition of opposition parties to unite to force changes to the Russian constitution after the upcoming election.

Maverick General Alexander Lebed and his shadowy ally Yuri Skokov, who are leading the nationalist Congress Of Russian Communities (KRO) into Sunday's poll, said they wanted pro-reform and conservative parties to ally to change the Russian basic law, heavily weighted in favour of presidential power.

The current constitution imposes no control on the authorities, as the war in Chechnya has shown," Mr. Skokov told journalists here. "We are calling for a coalition of opposition to modify this constitution."

The KRO in particular has singled out the Yabloko Party of reformist Grigory Yavlinsky, as well as the Communist Party of Gennady Zyuganov and the Agrarian Party of Mikhail Lapshin, to throw their weight behind the campaign.

All three groups and the KRO are expected to breach the five-per cent threshold in Sunday's elections, and thus form blocs in the new State Duma, or lower house of parliament.

"We cannot expect radical changes after the legislative elections," Gen. Lebed said.

The current Russian constitution, approved by popular referendum in December 1993 when the last general election was held, vests huge powers in the Russian presidency and limits the ability of parliament to legislate.

Meanwhile, the first votes in the Russian election have

already been submitted, with some 3,000 military personnel due to leave the country on long-term postings casting their ballots.

According to an exit poll quoted by the Defence Ministry, one in 10 voted for Mr. Zyuganov's Communists, but one-third nonetheless opted for "stability and a future without upheaval."

Meanwhile Russia's liberal reformers, caught between a resurgent Communist opposition and a government which no longer listens to their views, are starting defeat in the face in Sunday's parliamentary elections.

While Mr. Zyuganov is oozing confidence, leading liberal Yegor Gaidar is appealing to his supporters not to panic over fears that his party may not scrape over the five per cent barrier into parliament.

Though Mr. Yavlinsky's Yabloko Party looks set to clear the barrier with something to spare, Mr. Gaidar's Democratic Choice Of Russia bloc is hovering in the danger zone at a predicted six per cent or less.

Mr. Gaidar told a rally in Moscow Monday not to believe what he said were rumours deliberately spread by the Security Ministry, formerly the KGB, that his bloc would fail to enter the new State Duma.

"Rumours have never been spread by chance in Russia. This is being done to damage the chances of the democrats," he told his audience of Moscow intellectuals.

But he admitted the party's situation was bleak, at least in the short term. "We have to win. We cannot allow the worst mistake of all, to panic."

Mr. Gaidar's liberals, who

began with one of the biggest factions in the 1993 Duma, have been hit by splits and defections of leading figures.

Apart from Yabloko, at least four or five other small liberal parties are running separately in the election, and opinion polls say all of them will fail to clear the five per cent hurdle.

Liberal deputy Gleb Yakunin Sunday blamed the splits on personal ambitions which he said might mean 15 per cent of the total vote being wasted — a gift to the Communists and nationalists who are likely to dominate the new Duma.

Mr. Gaidar pointed out the paradox that the war in Chechnya, despite its unpopularity, had done more political damage to the liberals who opposed it than to those in the Kremlin who waged it.

He and Sergei Kovalyov, Russia's leading human rights advocate, warned that the Chechnya conflict posed a serious threat to Russian democracy.

Mr. Gaidar, a roly-poly intellectual whose brief spell in government is blamed by many ordinary Russians for all their economic hardships in the last four years, admitted this week that liberals were battling against a change in the political mood.

"I look at all the party manifestos and one word is missing — freedom. There is lots about order and fairness and even legality, but freedom seems to be missing," he told a gathering of human rights activists Sunday.

Mr. Gaidar said that despite the grim short term outlook, he was convinced that the future of Russia belonged to democracy. "There is no basis for the

restoration of a totalitarian regime in Russia," he said.

But others sounded a more pessimistic note. Sergei Yushenkov, a Gaidar ally who chaired the Defence Committee in the outgoing Duma, told Monday's rally he had been forced off the stage by derisive handclaps at a meeting with voters in Solnechnogorsk not far from Moscow.

The hostile audience there had given wild applause to a speaker from the openly fascist Russian National Unity Party which had promised to "send these Gaidars to the north to build roads with a pick and shovel."

Such incidents leave Russian liberal intellectuals agonising over where they have gone wrong. Some blame the media, some blame President Boris Yeltsin and some blame each other for keeping quiet out of political expediency.

"I now see people who used to describe themselves as democrats and who now deny they were democrats or anti-Communists at all," Mr. Gaidar said. "I see a lot of people who just look away."

Others say there is no point in blaming the Kremlin for Russia's historic failure to create a civil society to control the overwhelming power of the state.

Veteran dissidents who began the human rights movement in the Soviet Union 30 years ago say Russia is moving on a road that took Western countries centuries to travel.

"We are on the path to a civil society but it is a long path," said Lyudmila Alexeyeva, a pioneer dissident who spent years in exile in the United States.

Jackson Jr. wins election to Congress

CHICAGO (R) — Voters elected Jesse Jackson Jr. to a U.S. House of Representatives seat Tuesday, sending to Congress the namesake and son of the civil rights activist who twice sought his party's presidential nomination.

Returns from Chicago's second congressional district showed the 30-year-old Democrat winning as expected by a 3-1 margin over Republican Thomas Somer in the heavily Democratic district.

The younger Jackson was guaranteed election two weeks ago when he beat out four rivals, with 48 per cent

of the vote, to capture the Democratic spot on the ticket.

Election officials said turnout was very light, in the vicinity of 20 per cent.

Mr. Jackson, who grew up in the neighbourhood, had campaigned with his famous father, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, at his side. Monday Vice President Al Gore went to Chicago to urge voters to back the younger Jackson.

The election was held to fill the seat vacated by Mel Reynolds, who resigned in disgrace after he was convicted of having sex with an underage campaign worker.

Mr. Reynolds, a 43-year-old two-term Democrat, was sentenced two months ago to five years in jail following his conviction on charges of having sex with an underage campaign worker.

In winning the younger Jackson accomplished something his father never has. The elder Jackson has never been elected to office, save a ceremonial post as "shadow senator" for the District of Columbia, a position designed to promote the city's, statehood drive.

Seoul: Nuclear pact with North close

SEOUL (R) — North Korea and an international consortium have reached tentative agreement on details covering the supply of nuclear technology to the Communist state, a South Korean Foreign Ministry official said Wednesday.

The Korean Peninsula Development Energy Organisation (KEDO), whose main members are the United States, Japan and South Korea, is expected to sign the deal with Pyongyang representatives in New York over the weekend after the latest round of negotiations, the official told Reuters.

"A tentative agreement has been reached and we expect the signing sometime this weekend," said the official, who declined to be identified.

State radio and the domestic Yonhap News Agency said the agreement would be signed on Dec. 15.

The two sides have been wrangling over how to implement an accord reached in Geneva last October under which Washington agreed to provide Pyongyang with light-water nuclear reactors as part of a \$4.5 billion package that includes interim energy supplies.

In return, Pyongyang would phase out its graphite reactors, which are capable of producing material used to make nuclear weapons.

The Foreign Ministry official declined to give details of the New York accord.

However, a statement released after a meeting of South Korean ministers led by Unification Minister Rha Woong-Bae Wednesday said talks on implementing the Geneva accord were in the final stages.

"The government believes the agreement reflects Seoul's position that the type of nuclear reactors to

be provided to the North should be a South Korean standard model and that the South should play a central role in the project," the statement said.

Initial negotiations between KEDO and Pyongyang had bogged down over KEDO's insistence that South Korea should be the main contractor for the reactors.

Yonhap said North Korea in New York agreed to build at its own expense power transmission and distribution facilities and a fuel fabricating plant in return for KEDO arranging foreign loans.

North Korea also agreed to build roads to the nuclear power plants and berthing facilities at a nearby port to bring in construction materials. It would also provide a reactor simulator and training, Yonhap said.

Sri Lanka rebels reportedly seeking chemical weapons

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebels, who lost their northern Jaffna stronghold last week, were trying to smuggle in chemical weapons to fight government forces, military sources and a local newspaper said Wednesday.

"We had some intelligence that the Tigers were trying to smuggle in a shipment of arms," a military officer told Reuters.

He said navy patrols had been alerted to be on the look out for the rebel arms ship, suspected to be carrying chemical weapons.

The officer also said air force planes were also deployed on maritime reconnaissance to prevent rebel attempts to smuggle arms.

The Tigers are known to have a fleet of ships they use to bring arms to the waters off Sri Lanka's eastern seaboard where the weapons are unloaded into small boats and taken to guerrilla jungle bases.

The independent island newspaper quoted army intelligence sources as saying that a ship carrying a large amount of artillery and mortar shells filled with an inflammable chemical had set sail for Sri Lanka from a port in Turkey last week.

The sources told the paper the Liberation Tigers Of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels were seeking chemical weapons to attack government troops who captured their northern Jaffna town stronghold after a seven-week offensive.

The Tigers fired tear gas shells at the troops last month as they neared the town but the military said troops were not affect-

ed as they had been prepared for chemical weapons attacks and wore protective clothing.

Military officials have said they feared the rebels forced Jaffna residents to evacuate the town to attack troops with gas.

The Tigers, who have waged a 12-year war for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the north and east, used chemical weapons for the first time in June 1990 when they fired mortars filled with chlorine in an abortive effort to overrun an army camp.

The government says more than 50,000 people have died in the war.

The Tigers Tuesday attacked a police post at Urani in the eastern Batticaloa district but were beaten off, security officials said.

They said the rebels had hijacked a vehicle at Valachchenai, also in Batticaloa, the same day.

The rebels had stolen more than 20 vehicles from the public in the east in the past few weeks, apparently to carry large groups of fighters for attacks on army and police camps, the security officials said.

Intelligence reports indicated the rebels were planning simultaneous suicide attacks on military camps, they said.

Last Tuesday, hours after the army raised the national flag over Jaffna, rebels launched a suicide attack on an eastern police commando base killing 29 police officers and losing 65 fighters.

UN. Renews Rwanda force for final 3 months

UNITED NATIONS (R) — After lengthy negotiations which missed one deadline, the Security Council unanimously approved Tuesday a final three-month renewal of a reduced U.N. force for Rwanda, the scene of genocidal massacres last year.

The U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), numbering some 1,800 troops and 285 military observers, will be pared to 1,200 soldiers and 200 observers and military support staff. It will be withdrawn when its mandate expires March 8, 1996.

Rwanda, itself a Security Council member, originally wanted the U.N. force cut to 800 logistics, communications and engineering personnel. It regards U.N. troops as infringing on its sovereignty and would have preferred their immediate departure but finally agreed to a compromise.

The Security Council insisted that a force of at least 1,400 was needed to provide a climate of confidence to induce the return of some 1.6 million refugees who fled to neighbouring countries after last year's slaughter of up to a million minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus by troops and militia of the former Hutu-led government.

Most of the refugees still abroad are Hutus who sought asylum when a Tutsi-led government took power in July 1994 and fear retribution if they return home. Many are also being prevented from leaving their camps by soldiers and militia of the ousted Hutu government who hope to launch a comeback.

Death toll in Philippine ferry fire rises

MANILA (R) — Some 17 people were feared dead after a fire Wednesday aboard a Philippine ferry spread so rapidly some passengers were forced to jump into the sea without lifejackets, survivors and rescue officials said.

"The fire just kept growing...I jumped off the ship with my father although I could not swim very well," a 10-year old boy said in a radio interview.

"There was a sudden fire and it spread quickly so I went to the front of the boat and jumped," another passenger said. More than 160 passengers and crew were aboard the inter-island ferry MV Kimelody Crispy when a fire broke out in the galley and spread rapidly.

The ferry, with a capacity of more than 400 passengers, was on its way from Manila to Mindoro Island, about 125 kilometres south of the Philippine capital, when the fire broke out at around 2 a.m.

Survivors said there was an initial attempt to put out the flames with extinguishers but the fire quickly spread out of control.

More than 100 survivors were picked up by private vessels as well as Navy and Coast Guard vessels responding to distress calls.

Philippine Navy spokesman Anselmo Cabiligan said a navy ship that went to the Kimelody's rescue recovered 11 bodies.

Another six are believed to be at a Coast Guard unit in Nasugbu, Batangas, also south of Manila. Some of the dead were brought to the Coast Guard headquarters in Manila, radio reports said.

Mr. Cabiligan said the death toll so far was only tentative as reports on the incident were coming in from a variety of sources.

A navy spokesman said about 40 people were unaccounted for and a more accurate count was so far unavailable as the survivors were spread among a number of vessels.

A spokesman for owners Moreta Shipping Lines said the vessel was 20 years old and acquired from Japan three years ago.

Sea tragedies frequently occur in the Philippines where ferries, often badly maintained and poorly equipped, are one of the most common forms of public transport.

In 1987 more than 4,000 people died in the world's worst peacetime sea disaster when the ferry Duna Paz collided with a tanker in Philippine waters.

Last December more than 140 people were killed when the ferry Cebu City hit another tanker in Manila bay.



BONJOUR

Travel Now , Pay Later
Europe at your convenience

CASH	JD 555	JD 585	JD 615
6 installments	JD 104/m	JD 109/m	JD 115/m
1 week stay	Paris London Rome	Paris & Disneyland Paris & London Paris & Rome Paris & Madrid	Amssterdam Paris & Amsterdam Paris & Lisbon
+			
round trip ticket			

prices are per person in a double room

for more details, contact

The Orientals for Travel & Tours (OTT)
Tel. 683859 / 079-22207 Telefax 683876

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975
مستقل يومية عربية سياسية نشرت بالانجليزية من المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Home for refugees

THE PALESTINIAN refugee problem remains to be among the most crucial and difficult issues that have yet to be resolved between Israel and the affected Arab parties, particularly the Palestinians. The recognition of the complexity of the problem and the appreciation of its multi-dimensional aspects have led to the decision to leave it to a multilateral effort to which not only the Arab and Israeli sides but other countries as well would contribute.

The current meeting in Geneva is the second of its kind, but it holds out little prospect for registering more progress than the first. The reason for this is none other than Israel's determination to postpone the search for a solution till the final phase of the peace process. Much, therefore, has been said and negotiated on the future of the Palestinian territories, especially with regard to the extent of sovereignty rights that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) could enjoy in the interim period. But much less has been devoted to the people of Palestine who live in the diaspora, especially in the refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

The question concerns a few million people who are still awaiting resettlement in their homeland or compensation for their homes and properties left behind in Palestine. The Arab countries, which host some of these refugees, also have an interest in finding a solution to their plight. Israel, though, is on record against the repatriation of most of the Palestinian people, even to the West Bank, under the pretext that it fears for its security. The West Bank and Gaza Strip, we are told by Israel, cannot accommodate so many people for economic, if not for other, reasons.

This is where we part company with Israel. On the basis of full peace that is comprehensive and complete, there can be no excuse left for Israel to fear the return of Palestinian people who wish to go back to their country under the control of the PNA. Given the promises for regional development for the Palestinian areas, there is every reason to believe that the Palestinian national economy could become strong enough to sustain the rehabilitation of most, if not all, of the Palestinians, who wish to identify themselves with their people and country. This can be done in an atmosphere of real peace which cannot be attained as long as the millions of refugees and displaced people remain living in camps and abject poverty. We hope therefore that the current meeting in Geneva would attempt to go beyond what the earlier meetings on the issue did. Marking time as has been done in the past would simply not do. Worse still, the procrastination could backfire, even derail what has been accomplished already.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON Israel's pull out of Nablus, the largest of the West Bank towns, a writer in Al Ra'i said Wednesday that the withdrawal brought joy to the Palestinians inside and outside the occupied lands. Although the withdrawal came as a consequence of the signing of the Taba and the Oslo deals, the world realises that the end of the presence of Israeli troops in Arab towns came as a direct result of the intifada and the sacrifices of the Arab resistance, said Ibrahim Al Absi. The freedom fighters have reason to rejoice when they see their towns liberated after 28 years of occupation, during which a few had thought that the day will come when Israel will give up the occupied lands, added the writer. Had it not been for the steadfastness of the oppressed people of Palestine and their determination and struggle at all fronts, they would not have seen the dawn of freedom, and had the youth not resorted to stone throwing the Israeli troops, the occupation would have been perpetuated indefinitely, said the writer. The people of Nablus and the refugees in the camps as well as all the other towns and villages vacated from Israeli forces, said the writer, have cause to celebrate their liberation which marks the start of concrete steps for the creation of the independent Palestine state.

A WRITER in Al Dustour called for immediate intervention on the part of the Ministry of Supply to fix the prices of coffee, a popular drink in Jordan, and protect the interest of the consumers. Mohammad Daoud said there is no justification for the ministry to grant coffee merchants more time to adjust their prices to those of the world markets, which have fallen by 50 per cent; adding that the time has come for the ministry to force the merchants to sell coffee at world market prices. Indeed the ministry should even demand that the merchants pay the state the big difference in profit they had made by delaying with their compliance with its earlier directives to reduce the prices, said the writer. He said by giving the merchants another grace period, the ministry is encouraging them to accumulate more fortunes at the expense of the consumers.

The View from Academia

Do Arabs speak Arabic?

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

AT A GLIMPSE, the title of this article may sound odd and even nonsensical. Of course Arabs speak Arabic. What else do they speak? But the word "speak" is somewhat tricky. By it we mean more than what officially the language of a nation is (as in, say, "What is the official language of India?") and more than the instinctive, spontaneous and somewhat random use of words. Speaking is a conscious linguistic act which presupposes mastery of certain skills and competence in a complex variety of discourse elements, tactics and strategies. Speaking, in this sense, denotes not only the use of words to communicate information but also (and equally crucially) the manner and quality of such use: the ease, smoothness, fluency, efficiency, precision and effectiveness of expression. At this level, the question embodied in the title above becomes both an interesting and important to raise.

Let's also define the two other important words in the title: "Arabs" and "Arabic." The former (as used here) refers to all native speakers to Arabic who use language in formal, semi-formal and some informal situations. Such situations are infinite: classes, lectures, seminars, sermons, public speeches, radio and TV programmes and shows, job interviews, business transactions, etc. But they also include the somewhat less formal but nonetheless serious exchange of views and debates in social get-togethers, trips, outings and other encounters on all kinds of subjects. All other casual users of language and all other casual situations are excluded.

As for "Arabic," two levels of it are meant here. There are three essential forms of Arabic in the Arab World today. The first is classical Arabic (alfusha), the language of formal occasions. The second is colloquial Arabic (al'ameeb), the language of dialects and informal situations (the language we use at home, in the vegetable market, with our friends and relatives, etc.). The third, which has emerged recently, is a result of the marriage of the previous two, a hybrid form of Arabic referred to by many as modern-standard or common Arabic (aldarjeh); this is the language people use in many formal and semi-formal occasions, especially at encounters between people who do not share the same dialect or do not have an excellent command of classical Arabic. What people do here is use simultaneously words and expressions from both classical and colloquial Arabic. This form of Arabic, due to its ease,

is becoming extremely popular and fashionable these days. The second form, the colloquial, is not of concern to use here, though it is in itself a very interesting form.

Generally, speakers of classical and modern-standard Arabic (and this the point I wish to underscore in what follows) have a hard time expressing themselves comfortably and eloquently today. By "speakers" I mean everybody: students, teachers, writers, civil servants, politicians, housewives, drivers. The vast majority of people in our society (the highly educated as much as the less educated, the old and the young, the urbanites and the villagers) do not speak Arabic easily, comfortably and effectively. The best way to notice and recognise this problem, which many among do not notice and recognise, is to compare speakers of Arabic with speakers of other languages.

Try the following experiment. Listen to the radio and watch TV, say, a couple of hours every night; listen to native speakers of Arabic using Arabic, and native speakers of English using English. Listen to or watch news, interviews, talks shows, speeches, etc. Compare. Most of the time, you'll find that speakers of English speak faster and more easily and comfortably, are more precise and less repetitious than speakers of Arabic. English spoken by its native speakers sounds much more natural and spontaneous than Arabic spoken by Arabs. I have, on many occasions, listened to specialists in Arabic, individuals who hold B.A.'s, M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s; I am amazed at how slow they are, how many unnecessary pauses they make, how inefficient, how imprecise in the choice of vocabulary, how rough. It is indeed ironic that many of our students of English (who have learned the language in our part of the world) speak it more fluently than they speak their own mother tongue. It would not be an exaggeration to say that using Arabic, for most native speakers today, is much like driving a bulldozer up a mountain.

Why? The fault is neither that of the speaker nor that of the language itself. The native learner of Arabic is as good as any native learner of any language, and the Arabic language itself is as good and effective as any other language. In my opinion, the problem is, primarily, a result of the way language is taught to us.

Some may attribute the cause to the fact that classical

Arabic and modern-standard Arabic are not used, in our daily encounter with language, as frequently as the colloquial language is used. This is undeniable. However, I attribute the problem more to the aim and method of teaching Arabic than to any other factor.

The emphasis in teaching Arabic at our schools and universities is placed more on the function of words and expressions than on their use. The student is expected to know what the word stands for in the sentence and not how he ought to use it in the many daily situations. While many students of other languages are drilled in the use of sentence patterns and idioms, our students are expected to memorise the various functions of words and sentences. Too much emphasis is placed on pure grammar (i'rab); most of the time, our students find themselves attempting to know by heart rules which they have little understanding or use of. I distinctly remember the Arabic teacher coming to class (during my secondary-school years) to ask us defiantly after he writes a sentence on the board: "Who can tell the function of itha (if) in this sentence?" Of course, nobody could tell him. And he was so excited and pleased to tell us. We copied and memorised.

This is the root-cause of the problem, and the solution lies in the change of purpose and the change of method. When we teach Arabic, we should distinguish between a learner who comes to specialise in Arabic — and who therefore needs to learn all of the rules and the function of words — and the nonspecialist learner, i.e. the vast majority of people. A student who plans to become an engineer, a doctor, a historian, a carpenter, a civil servant, etc., needs to speak Arabic and write it effectively. For that, he needs a few rules only and much practice. The emphasis should be placed more (much more) on drilling, listening, reading and writing than on memorising or analysing grammatical rules. The specialist in Arabic grammar or linguistics needs to know all the functions of itha (perhaps), but the engineer, doctor, historian or carpenter does not.

It is time to take the needs of language users into serious consideration and to plan our language courses and their methods accordingly. To master Arabic and speak it more efficiently and effectively, we need less grammar and more drilling and practice.

Peres' wishful thinking

By G. H. Jansen

THE BEAUTIFULLY orchestrated publicity extravaganza that was the address of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to the joint session of the U.S. Congress had a barely concealed political purpose: to pressure Syria, and in particular President Hafez Al Assad, to make peace with Israel.

Beginning with Mr. Peres' opening words to the U.S. legislators, "my very dear friends," which is what those gentlemen are, the flattery was laid on with a trowel, ending with a twice-repeated "thank you America." The tone of the speech was best described by a special word popularised by the members of the American Jewish community — the producers and directors and financiers who created the film industry in Hollywood — "schmalztz." A word taken from the lingua franca of European Jewry, Yiddish.

"Schmalztz" is a combination of sentimentality and gushing emotion. The speech culminated with a particularly "schmalztzy" personal appeal from Mr. Peres to Mr. Assad to make peace, on Israel's terms. But that appeal has not worked — at least so far. Immediately after the speech a Syrian spokesman and both the official newspapers in Damascus asked the question, "but what about the total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights?"

Indeed, Syrian-Israeli peace depends on a resolution of disagreements on three crucial points: First, either Syria have to drop its insistence on this total withdrawal or Israel will have to

withdraw. Second, Syria would have to drop its demand that the new Syrian-Israeli frontier should be the old international border, which gave Syria a stretch of land along the Sea of Galilee; or Israel would have to stop insisting on the border of June 4, 1967, which gave Israel more Syrian territory. Third, Israel would have to stop asking for Israeli-manned radar observation posts on the Golan Heights or Syria would have to stop refusing them.

None of these three alternatives seems likely to be sorted out in the near future.

Just before Mr. Peres' speech, Israel indicated, as a quid pro quo, that if Syria got its territorial demand on the Golan, Israel would keep a larger area of "Judea and Samaria" (the West Bank) which, after all, is the heart of the "promised land."

In might not ever come to that for if Israel gets peace with Syria by conceding on the three points that concession would have to be agreed to by the Knesset, and by the Israeli public, and especially by the religious right wingers who killed former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for his willingness to surrender "Eretz Israel"; and also by the Palestinians who would have to pay the territorial price for Israel-Syrian peace.

Contemplating the manifold difficulties that lie ahead on the Israel-Syria peace track, it would seem that the American and Israeli optimists are at present clutching at straws and indulging in very wishful thinking.

A story of economic success

By Maher A. Waked

AS WE celebrate the 60th birthday of His Majesty King Hussein, we should remember with gratitude the kind of country he tried to build and the many and countless achievements that have been fulfilled during the king's rule.

Among those achievements are the development and growth of the economy. The banking sector, for example, has continued its growth during 1995 and achieved remarkable results, which reflect the continuous zeal aiming at activating the economy and harnessing inflation. These results reflect themselves on many areas. Among them are:

— Total assets held by banks by the end of July were in the region of JD 7,936 millions, compared to JD 7,528 millions by the

end of 1994. The increase amounts to 5.4 per cent.

— Total private sector's deposit reached JD 3,418 millions by the end of July, compared to JD 3,300 millions by the end of 1994, marking an increase of 3.6 per cent.

— Total banks' capitals rose from JD 240.9 millions by the end of 1994 to JD 298.3 millions by the end of July, with an increase of 3.1 per cent.

Figures show that the Jordanian economy has achieved an annual rate of growth of nearly 6 per cent, which exceeds the targeted ratio. The budget deficit in connection with the GNP was confined to a ratio not exceeding 5-6 per cent, and the external public debt was reduced to 91 per cent of the GNP from almost 180 per cent in the initial years of the economic adjustment

programme. This is mainly due mainly to debt rescheduling, buying back debt trenches, servicing and also, to debt forgiveness.

In order to show how considerable were the economic achievements of the country, one could point to the growth of the national exports, the narrowing of the deficit in commercial balance, the increased volume of remittances from Jordanians abroad, the monetary stability, which can be translated into maintaining fixed price relation between the JD and the U.S. dollar, the process of curbing inflation, the growing size of the Kingdom's foreign reserves and the small but stable growth in money supply.

Again, when it comes to the banking sector, we can easily observe that a number of 21 banks, both locally incorporated and foreign,

with 423 branches, are operating both in Jordan and abroad.

The government and the private sector truly succeeded in presenting the country to the world as a promising haven for future advancement in all walks of life and a suitable climate for investment and business.

Against that backdrop, a word of justice must be said: Without the sincere and continuous efforts of King Hussein, his charisma and the high esteem he enjoys all over the world, and without the hard work exerted by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, much of what has been achieved would not have been possible.

The writer is an Amman-based banker. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

U.S. fingers crossed in runup to Russian elections

By Carol Giacomo
Reuter

WASHINGTON — As it often has since the Soviet Union collapsed four years ago, the United States has its fingers crossed that congenial, pro-democratic forces will survive another political challenge in Russia.

Communists and ultra-nationalists are expected to make major gains in Sunday's Russian parliamentary elections. But there is uncertainty how the vote will affect Russia's evolution towards free-market democracy and its cooperation with the West on a host of issues including Bosnia.

Washington's worst fear is that President Boris Yeltsin and his government would face more pressure to slow reforms and assent a more nationalist,

anti-Western foreign policy. That is a troubling thought to Americans, given recent U.S.-Russia struggles over NATO expansion, Moscow's nuclear cooperation with Iran and efforts to end the Balkans war.

The most optimistic plausible outcome seems an expectation that the Russian Duma, or lower house, would continue to be the same fractious body it is now, with gains for the communists but no radical shift in support to any one faction.

"What that means is, it won't be any easier for Yeltsin to govern," one senior U.S. official said.

He termed the election for 450 Russian parliamentary seats "politics as bloodsport," and added: "There are more imponderables than certainties."

The staggering number of choices means the exact gains

for a particular party or bloc may not be known for weeks. Forty-three parties are competing for 225 seats. Another 225 are contested among thousands of independent candidates.

In the last parliamentary election in 1993, communists received under 10 per cent of the vote.

This time, analysts expect them to win at least 20 per cent — and more if the protest against Mr. Yeltsin and his team is resounding as voters react to crime, corruption, declining living standards and nostalgia for the old days when Soviet power commanded respect and fear around the world.

An unexpectedly strong showing by the communists and their allies could paralyse executive-legislative cooperation and "clearly would toughen Russian foreign policy," said Leon Aron, a Russia

expert with the American Enterprise Institute.

This could lead to greater Russian resistance to NATO expansion and might even cause Mr. Yeltsin to renege on a commitment to deploy Russian troops to Bosnia as part of a U.N.-NATO peacekeeping mission, Mr. Aron said.

But other analysts say the Russian president has considerable constitutional powers independent of the Duma and it is unlikely the communists and their allies will command the two-thirds vote needed to override Mr. Yeltsin's veto.

That leads Clifford Gaddy of the Brookings Institution to conclude that "even a more conservative, more anti-reform parliament than we have now would not be reflected in policy."

Harley Blazer, a Russia expert with Georgetown Uni-

versity, believes a communist victory would only affect Moscow's foreign policy at the margins.

Ultra-nationalists in recent years "have already pushed the whole spectrum to the right," he said, adding: "I don't think they can do more without getting Russia into serious trouble."

Expert opinion is also divided about the likely fate of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, a Clinton administration favourite and possible Mr. Yeltsin successor. He is the big name behind our home is Russia, the centrist political party made up of government officials and backed by major banks.

If Mr. Chernomyrdin's party does not make a credible showing, he could be sacrificed to appease communist and other elements who want to undo the modest gains of Russian pri-

vate business.

However it plays out in the short term, the Duma voting will have its biggest impact on next — for instance, boosting prospects for Genady Zyuganov if his communist party exceeds forecasts.

The new legislature thus could become a chessboard in the struggle to succeed Mr. Yeltsin. Few experts rule him out as a candidate for reelection despite failing health. Some say he may be more apt to run if communists score big on Sunday.

The United States, also in the midst of a presidential campaign, hopes to minimise tensions with Russia during a politically volatile period. U.S. officials see more common ground with Moscow than not and see a complete upheaval of Russia's system as unlikely.

Society on the Move

Some see things as they are, others . . .

No cause for alarm or excitement if you found a local news report on turning Amman into a tourist temptation titillating. The report quoted Fairouz Masoud, an engineer and head of the Central Amman Planning Department at the Amman Municipality, as saying that the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was planning to secure Japanese funding to give Amman a major facelift, especially Hashimite Square, and even construct a tunnel from the amphitheatre to the Citadel. Such a plan, say Ministry of Tourism officials, is not about to materialise any time soon. Furthermore, the JICA have commissioned a team which has been conducting in-depth studies on developing the tourism sector in Jordan. Some of the team's concepts may never see the light of day, admit ministry sources, besides, they add, coming up with the resources to fund some of the more appropriate schemes is still a task to be accomplished. According to the ministry, the team's ideas are easily looked at, but the tunnel is definitely not in the visa.

FROM AMPHITHEATRE TO COLOSSEUM: Chargé d'Affaires of the Italian embassy in Amman Diego Brasiliotti heads home with his family to Rome "after 1,521 happy days in Jordan." Dr. Brasiliotti will become the second in charge at the Middle East desk, political section, at the Italian Foreign Ministry. The young envoy and his Lebanese wife Rati came to Amman from his first foreign posting in Islamabad, Pakistan. Their stay here was blessed with the arrival of their son Romano who was born in Amman last year. Dr. Brasiliotti took over as chargé with the departure of Romualdo Bettini who ended his tour of duty as ambassador to Jordan last month. When the Brasiliottis leave Amman this coming week, Second Secretary Raffaele De Benedicis will become chargé d'affaires until the arrival of the new ambassador expected sometime in January. A large reception to send them off

with good tidings was held last night at the InterContinental Hotel. The Brasiliottis, like the Bettinis, will be missed by all who had the pleasure to work with them and know them. They admit that they were struck with more than a few pangs of heartache as well when they learned they would be leaving. Wishing them all the best.

IT'S ALL IN THE MARKETING: While some may be Italy-bound, others are eventually bound for France. Buy a Citroën and get a free ticket to Paris to spend five days visiting the city and EuroDisney, as the guest of Dirani Citroën agents in Jordan. That is just one way Dirani aims to market its full line of Citroën motor vehicles, and it has been working, says Majdi Nashashibi, director of sales marketing. Citroën was first introduced to Jordan in the 1960s under the agency of Farid and Izzeddine Jweihan. When Dirani, who were experienced in the used car sales market, found the opportunity to take over the agency, they "grabbed it." There is a different marketing objective and therefore approach. Since taking the Citroën agency in 1992 and first importing new cars in 1993, Dirani sales climbed. "We had an excellent market share of medium luxury car sales," says Nashashibi. The promotion of a trip to France plus accommodations is a local concept. The deadline on the offer is December 15, 1995, after which, the agent will poll its participating customers to determine when they would like to make the trip because the package deal works as a group trip. Considering the way the labour strikes are paralysing the city of love, it may not be such a bad idea to "love Paris in the springtime." In any case, bon voyage.

MAN ON A MISSION: Readers of Middle East International (MEI) may be interested to learn that the political fortnightly's editor, Michael Wall, is resigning after "almost 15 years in the chair." The MEI board has asked Wall to stay on as consulting editor. Wall saw this struggling publication through some serious financial crises, the most severe of which surfaced last spring when he thought he might have to shut down. But a last minute rescue helped him salvage his operation, and the "future looks assured for some time to come." Wall will be succeeded, come the beginning of 1996, by Deputy Editor Stephen Sherman. According to Wall, the paper was started and continues with a mission to fulfill — to reach as wide a readership as possible. So if that means doing so at lower prices and relying on financial support from those who believe in that mission, then, so be it, says Wall.

A GENEROUS FAREWELL: Two American archaeologists, here in Jordan on Fulbright Research Grants, recently took it upon themselves to carry out a volunteer salvage operation at Bab Edh-Dhra, an important Early Bronze Age (3200-3050 B.C.) cemetery. Illegal excavations and looting of the site have been a deplorable yet ongoing fact for more than 70 years say officials at the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR). The looters hunt primarily for precious burial pottery, of which scholars conclude few remain. But when David McCreery, a former ACOR director who has been in and out of Jordan in various professional capacities for about 20 years, visited the site in October, he was alarmed by evidence of recent looting and the opening of 39 new shaft tombs in a previously unexplored area. At that, Dr. McCreery requested and was granted permission from the Department of Antiquities to conduct a four-day emergency salvage project to map the site, document what had been left behind in the tombs by the looters and collect representative pottery, wood and bone samples. Dr. McCreery engaged another Fulbright Fellow, David Villa (currently

researching the early Islamic period in Jordan), plus his wife Linda, and daughter Krista and headed to Bab Edh-Dhra. The artifacts they brought back with them from the site are being studied by Yarmouk University Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Director Dr. Zeidan Kafaji and his staff and will be displayed at the museum. A report on the salvage operation will be published in The Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. Dr. McCreery and his family leave Jordan this month and head home for Salem, Oregon, where he will return to teaching at Willamette University. We thought his selfless deed, perhaps done as a departing gesture, should not go unrecognised.

STILL GROUNDED: Although Lufthansa, the German air carrier, has not operated flights out of Jordan since the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, its office, which has been maintained for nearly four decades (flights to Amman began in 1976) has continued to provide services to customers. In appreciation of the airline's top sales agent, Manager Abdullah Kishiek and his staff are hosting a reception in the offices proper. In the immediate Arab area Lufthansa flies to Damascus and Cairo, and has cooperation agreements with United Airlines, SAS, Thai International and South African Airways. The powers that be at the German air flagship will be meeting after the season's holidays, at which time they will decide on the status of routes in the Middle East region and if it will follow some of its sister European airlines in reopening its Amman destination.

Jennifer Hamarneh

More older U.S. women having babies out of wedlock

By Deborah Zaarenko
WASHINGTON — One American child in four is now born out of wedlock, and single mothers are becoming older and richer, the U.S. Census Bureau has reported. Although the overall U.S. rate of single motherhood had dropped slightly from 1992, the figures showed a significant increase among affluent, well-educated working women, said Amara Bach, who wrote the Census Bureau's report. Ms. Bach, a statistician and demographer, called this phenomenon the "Murphy Brown syndrome," a popular television character who chose to become a single mother in her 40s while working as a high-powered job. The high boom in out-of-wedlock births was among women in their 30s whose biological clocks were ticking loudly, Ms. Bach told Reuters in a telephone interview. The total birth rate for U.S. women aged 30 to 34 was 90 per 1,000 women in

1994, the most recent year available, according to the study. That is nearly double the 56.4 rate for similarly aged women in 1976. For women in their late 30s, there was a comparable increase: From 22.6 births per 1,000 in 1976 to 36 per 1,000 last year. Unwed mothers are increasingly those who have already started careers and have chosen to bear children, Ms. Bach said. The report showed that 26 per cent of total U.S. births were to single mothers in 1994, down from 30 per cent in 1992. Among black women, 66 per cent of births were to unmarried mothers, but Ms. Bach said this represented a decrease from previous years. More teenagers are becoming single mothers as a response to changing societal forces, Ms. Bach said. She said the stigma of single parenthood is fading and government programmes enable younger mothers to continue their education to give them a better chance of supporting their children.

The story of the Gazans

Life At The Crossroads: A History Of Gaza
by Gerald Butts
Nicosia-Epping: Kimal-Scorpion Cavendish, 1995. Price £16.95, hardcover

Life for the many peoples who have inhabited Gaza since the fourth or fifth millennium B.C. has been turbulent, for this narrow coastal strip is certainly the world's most travelled and embattled crossroad. For over four millennia a meeting place of empires and civilisations, a frontier post between Asia, Europe and Africa, a trading port between Arabia and the Mediterranean and staging post of armies, Gaza has been invaded and sacked, repopulated and rebuilt countless times. The Gazans have endured. They now number 800,000 people, crammed into the area of the autonomous enclave evacuated by Israel in 1994. Living on 216 square kilometres of their land, or 60 per cent of the Strip, the majority of Gazans exist in urban slums gripped by poverty and frustration. Today the Gaza crossroads is a cul de sac, caught between Israel and its "cold peace" with Egypt, enclosed by Israel and cut off from its traditional trade routes. With peace — if a comprehensive peace comes — Gaza could regain its former position and become once again a major crossroads. In his admirable "biography", the first history of Gaza ever written, Gerald Butts shows how Gaza, the city state, has survived the depredations of the armies of Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Davidian Israel, Byzantium, the Arabs, Mamlukes, Turks and Crusaders, France, Britain, the Egyptian Republic and modern Israel. Little Gaza can match the great metropolises of the world in name dropping for it was visited by several of the great Egyptian pharaohs, the Persian ruler Cambyses, Alexander the Great, Saladin, Napoleon and Allenby. Today Gaza is once again a city state, enjoying a degree of autonomy, as off before, granted by its more powerful, domineering neighbour (this time Israel). And, as before, the Gaza city state is set to be joined by similar autonomous city states. However, in olden times Gaza's sister city states

lay along the Levant coast and had the freedom of the sea: today they are emerging in the Israeli occupied Palestinian West Bank — Jenin, Qalqilya, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron — and are both land-locked and sealed off from their hinterland by the Israeli occupation, as is Gaza. One of Butts' most positive accomplishments in this history is that he has exploded the myth that the "Philistines" were as the modern usage of their name denotes a people "of material outlook, indifferent to culture." Westerners probably infused the word "philistine" with this meaning because of their readings of the Old Testament tales which describe the wars in the 12th century BC between the Philistines and the Hebrew tribes with whom Christianity identified. In truth the Philistines were certainly more advanced and civilised than the Jewish hillpeople whom they fought. For, as Butts shows, the Philistines belonged to the migration of the mysterious "Sea People" who invaded Crete and Cyprus and then turned up on the Gaza shore in 1175 BC. The Philistines were taller than the local peoples, their troops wore kilts and ribbed helmets and drove chariots, they smelted iron and traded with the islands of the Aegean. Although beaten on the battlefield (near Gaza) and turned away from the rich spoils of Egypt by pharaoh's army, the Philistines established five city states in southern Palestine. Gaza emerging as their capital, "Philistia" — becoming "Falastrin" or "Palestine" over time — did not become a technological or cultural backwater for another 2,000 years. Under the Persians and Assyrians Gaza retained its status as a city state, paying tribute to the conquering empire, but retaining considerable autonomy. Gaza fell to Alexander the Great after a two month siege and was Hellenised, adopting Greek as the spoken language. Butts says it is believed a great library was established there as the scholarship of Alexandria was extended along the coast of Egypt into Palestine. After 36 years of occupation by the less civilised Hebrew Hasmonaeans, Gaza became part of the Roman empire, retaining a large degree of independence as a major

BOOK REVIEW

commercial port but partaking in Roman advancements in engineering and architecture and efficient administration. In the third and fourth centuries AD Gaza reluctantly received Christianity. St. Hilarion, who was born near Gaza, was the leading figure of his lifetime, founding a monastery and building a church which were both destroyed. In 402 Bishop Porphyry succeeded in demolishing the pagan temples in the city and raising the large church named after the Byzantine Empress Eudoxia on the major temple. Under the Byzantines Gaza acquired several churches, one of which survives today; a school of rhetoric, a forum, colonnaded streets and a municipal council which ran local affairs. Butts quotes an Italian pilgrim who visited the city in 570 and found it "a lovely and renowned city, with noble people distinguished by every kind of liberal accomplishment." So attractive was Gaza as a trading station for the formidable Meccan merchants that Hashim Ibn Abd Manaf, the great grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad, visited the city often and, in fact, died and was buried in the mercantile heart of the city where a mosque was dedicated to his name. Because of their long contacts with Meccans and Arab merchants, the Gazans, when conquered by the Arab army in 637, quickly converted to Islam and transformed the great Byzantine church into a mosque named for the Caliph Omar Ibn Al Khattab, which dominates the centre of the city today. Under the Arab Empires Gaza continued to flourish both commercially and culturally. It was only under the Seljuk Turks that Gaza faltered, because Seljuk and later Ottoman farming tax destroyed the basis of its economic prosperity. Thus, Butts shows that the pejorative implications of the term "Philistine" are totally unfounded — though that term still conditions Western minds against the Philistines' Palestinian heirs today. Of course, his book does much more for it tells the story of the Gazans up to the present, as they emerge from Israeli rule as an autonomous if not a fully independent people.

Michael Jansen

'The Peace Beavers'

Best Of Enemies
The Memoirs Of Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi
Bosni: Little, Brown and Co., 1995, 297 pages, \$23.9

Peace's per definition made between enemies — that is the motif of Best of Enemies. The prominence of Abu Sharif and Mahnaimi in the mainstream of their respective societies, sets this book apart from earlier ones co-authored by Palestinians and Israelis, for these were dialogues between Palestinian leftists and Israeli non-Zionists. In the context of the peace settlement now in progress, it can be assumed that Abu Sharif and Mahnaimi intended their joint memoirs to further Palestinian-Israeli understanding. The two authors should be well-qualified to do so, for both are men of considerable culture. Yet the tendency is to focus on counterpoising Palestinian high-jackings with Israeli intelligence operations. This makes exciting reading, but too often borders on sensationalism rather than insights. Mahnaimi studied Arab society and culture, as part of his training to be an intelligence officer. He several times states that these studies, plus first-hand contact, radically changed his perceptions of Arabs, but he says little about how. Abu Sharif's writing, while engaging in style, is often superficial to the point of flippancy when discussing Palestinian internal affairs and thinking. In the first half of the book, he is highly successful in intertwining his personal memoirs with the overall Palestinian experience. However, the second half focuses so heavily on his own importance and on leadership maneuvering that we lose sight of the people for

whom he claims to speak. Even among the elite, he seems to view himself as a kind of prophet — always the first to know, to get new ideas. Only towards the end, when expressing optimism that the secret talks that led to the Oslo accord would bear fruit, does he acknowledge "The peace beavers, myself and all the others, had been gnawing away to the point that the logjam had to give" (p. 283). These limitations simply mean that, with the exception of a few sensitive passages, the book does not surpass the political context which spawned it. The PLO-Israeli accord is, after all, not a recipe for people to learn to live together, but rather a blueprint for separation in accordance with the

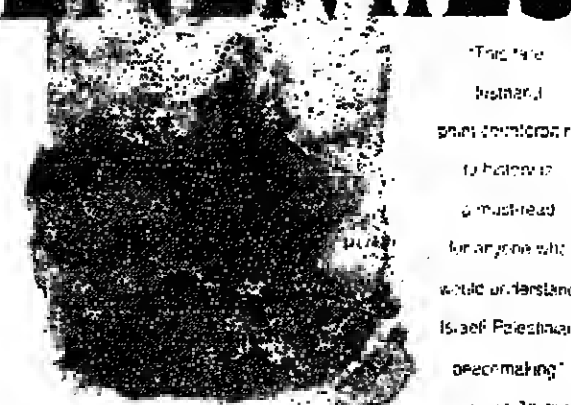
BOOK REVIEW

Labour Party's racist programmes and philosophy. The most salient cooperation engendered by this accord takes the form of political baggaging and manoeuvres on the part of the two respective leaderships. Abu Sharif's tendency to see himself as the vanguard of the entire Palestinian liberation movement reaches the point of arrogance when he tells how one evening in Tunis in early 1988, he came up with a "strategic" idea: "To control the intifada" (p. 231), i.e., to set a series of achievable aims. "In this way, they always had something to demonstrate for," he confides (p. 232). Though he does not give a specific date, it is hard to believe that this evening in early 1988 was prior to January 10th when the United National

Leadership of the Intifada issued a communique which specified a series of interim goals, such as: Ending the iron fist policy, repealing the Emergency Laws, dissolving Israeli-appointed local councils, withdrawing the Israeli army from population centres and releasing detainees. Nor does one remember that there was a big problem in early 1988 with the people in the occupied territories finding something to demonstrate for. In short, Abu Sharif's attitude shows profound disregard for the popular dynamics and collective leadership functioning in the occupied territories. While he appears to regard the orders he faxed to the occupied territories as the momentum of the intifada, one is reminded of when activists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began remarking ruefully that fax machines would soon outnumber stones as the weapons of the intifada. However, to be fair, some passages written by Abu Sharif reflect the best of Palestinian political and social culture by bringing out universalist as well as particularly Palestinian values. In contrast, Mahnaimi is much more modest, but remains rooted in a particularly Jewish-Israeli mindset. This makes it all the more convincing when, at the end, he comes to terms with the fact that by creating a state through violence, "we have built ourselves another ghetto." Enigmatically, he concludes by saying, "I personally think the chances of Israel surviving very far into the twenty-first century are no better than fifty-fifty" (p. 287).

Sally Bland

BEST of ENEMIES



THE MEMOIRS OF
Bassam Abu Sharif & Uzi Mahnaimi

New Age Recording

By Jean-Claude Elias

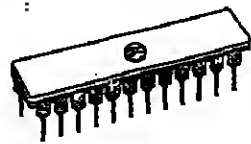
One of the wonderful aspects of personal computing is the way it has brought together a variety of techniques that apparently had nothing in common. Sound and music recording for instance has always been performed using traditional, tape-based recorders, in the post-Edison era at least! Although direct-to-disk digital recordings have been used since the late seventies, they were considered as extremely "hi-tech" and required mammoth budgets. Now hi-fi stereo, top quality, inexpensive digital recording can be done on Mr. Everybody's (well, almost!) personal computer.

The Compact Disc (CD) optical laser disc is changing all that. The CD is available in many formats, all of them consumer-oriented and quite affordable for the most. Any CD format gives a nearly perfect sound that can be stored unaltered for several decades.

The CD-DA audio CD is the well-known music laser disc. It has virtually replaced the 40-year-old vinyl long playing record but not the die-hard cassette. The CD-DA can be played on regular audio CD players and on computer CD-ROM players as well. The PC-based CD-ROM drive can play audio CDs and data CDs. A CD-ROM can hold up to 700 MB (million characters) of data. It can only be used in a computer-based CD drive. Other sub-models and variations exist but they are all based on the same technology.

Both the CD-DA and the CD-ROM are read-only devices. One can play back the music stored on them or read the data they contain but one cannot record on them. Commercially available drives that allow users to record on CDs have appeared since last year. As it is usually the case in the computer world, prices were very high at the beginning. A recordable CD drive could cost JD 3,000 to 4,000 in Jordan. It is now marketed at about two thousand — quite a significant drop. Over the same period blank discs also dropped from JD 18 to JD 12.

chip talk



Once a recordable CD drive is installed in a computer, it opens the door to a world of recording possibilities. Needless to say it also serves as a regular CD-DA and CD-ROM player. Users can record data, sound or a mixture of both. Yamaha, Pinnacle, Mitsubishi and other manufacturers offer a variety of drives. Pioneer have recently announced a world premiere: A home hi-fi, stand alone (i.e. not computer-based) drive that can play and record audio CDs.

Whatever goes on a laser disc is there "for good". Weaknesses typical to the tape or vinyl media do not exist on digital support: Sound degradation, distortion, drop-out, flutter, scratches become things of the past.

The recording operation requires a relatively fast PC with enough memory and hard disk storage — a 486 with 8MB and 540 MB minimum, respectively. Don't try it with your old 286 computer. The necessary software is inexpensive, available at most retailers in Jordan, and the actual recording technique itself is not difficult to learn. Still, recording is an art and anyone planning to produce Elton John's next album should get some experience first.

By offering one single media for both sound and data, the CD may achieve what the floppy disk, the cassette and the vinyl disk could not: Create one reliable, compatible media for multiple platforms.

Hopeless, helpless, and hapless romantics

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

While there can be no doubt that each and every one of us is unique in his or her own way, it remains widely shared that one could tell a lot about a person by investigating the star sign under which they were born. A Taurus, for example, generally achieves what he or she wants through the ability to persevere. And a Cancerian generally sticks with what he or she does, seeing it through to the end. And both share the deep sense of brotherhood and respect for humanitarian values. Values that we should all learn to uphold.

It also remains normal that all of us have our own ambitions and dreams. And it remains important that we have the hope and faith in ourselves that will help us achieve those dreams. Ideally, it could be wonderful if one day we could all find someone special to share those dreams with. Special because of who they really are and what they are really like inside. But it would also be just as wonderful to have close friends to talk to about all those wishes and dreams. And because we are the social creatures that we are, in terms of the way we feel about certain things, in the way we do certain things, in the way we choose our friends, and in the way we think of others, our social identity is determined and shaped accordingly: Who we are, as opposed to who the others are. The intricacies of such relationships are about how others perceive us and how we perceive others around us.

We must learn to skirt all the really deep contemporary waters and learn about the warmth of environmentalism and political hope. This we must do in the hope that we can inspire others to pick up from where we leave off. Big ideas in our society are very much needed. We might be more comfortable living off the past, but we desperately need a future. We have to seek a future. We cannot keep turning to our past everytime we need to feel good about ourselves. The Kan Zaman, Taybet Zaman, and Salt Zaman cannot carry us into the 21st century.

Primarily, we need to trust ourselves. To have faith in our talent, abilities, sensibilities, and everything that helps us to stand out and succeed. And because of this, it is quite

thrilling and admirable when our young people are out there doing new things: learning language, learning about music, and creating music, willing to meet new people and make more friends with every passing day, willing to trust one another with the most guarded secrets, developing an interest in knowledge for the sake of knowledge and nothing else, and marvelling at the achievements of others with an eye on doing better and bigger things.

Each one of us is a composite of his or her habits. And these habits are where knowledge, skill and desire meet. Where the 'what to do', the 'how to do' and the 'want to do' come together. But sometimes, the 'can do' can be far more overwhelming than the 'want to do'. Nonetheless, our imagination must not be allowed to get strangled by reason. And if we can't be like this, maybe our children can. Maybe they will be better equipped to take part in safeguarding the environment, in initiating dialogue with others, in being able to lead a better and healthier lifestyle, and in being able to love freely and honestly.

Maybe our children will be able to work with Europeans to fulfil the legacy initiated in Barcelona while back and to reverse the tide of instability, insecurity and extremism. Maybe they too can overcome moral cowardice in facing up to issues and diseases such as AIDS. And hopefully sooner rather than later. Maybe they can also make some good of Jordan's efforts to build peace and prosperity and do a better job than we are now doing in order to put this country on the right track in the new era of peace.

Maybe they will be able to tackle the problem regarding hormones, pesticides, and insecticides in food we consume on a daily basis because we have been thus far unable to find anybody willing to listen to our pleas. The same can be said about the carnage on our roads that nobody is willing to take seriously. And indulging in monologues about what exactly is 'normalisation' will also come to no good.

All that we need to do is be allowed to go on with leading normal lives. Selfishness, indifference, and carelessness will get us nowhere. Nowhere that decent at least. We will not be able to talk ourselves out of our present dilemmas. And if we keep going down that road to hell, all the voices of reason can only trail away in silence.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, Dec. 14, 1995

1:00 Iris - The Happy Professor
1:10 Fireman Sam
1:25 Hurricanes
1:50 My Secret Identity
2:10 NBA
3:00 The New Leave It To Beaver
3:30 White Heat
4:30 Gillette World Sport Special
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Varieties
Taratata
7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
7:15 Archimede
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Carol And Company
8:00 Magazine Zero, One
8:25 The Album Show
9:10 The New Avengers
10:00 News In English
10:25 Movie - "City Boy"
Starring: James Brolin & Wendel Meldrom
12:00 Nancy Wake (Ep. II)

7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
7:15 Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Boogies Diner
8:00 Cinema, Cinema
8:25 The Bold & The Beautiful
9:10 Varieties
9:30 Heartbeat
10:00 News In English
10:25 Counterstrike
11:15 Stay Lucky (Ep. I)
12:00 My Two Wives

Monday, Dec. 18, 1995

2:00 Shelly Duval's Bedtime Stories
2:30 Richie Rich
2:55 Playabout
3:10 Hey Dad
3:35 Discover Magazine
4:00 The Adventures Of The Black Stallion
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Fractale
5:30 Serie
Des Heros Ordinaires
7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
7:15 Numbos
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 McHale's Navy
8:00 Invention
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Star Trek - The Next Generation
10:00 News In English
10:25 Anna EP. IV
11:15 The American Chart Show
12:00 New York Undercover

Tuesday, Dec. 19, 1995

2:00 Captain Planet
2:30 Earth Star Voyager
3:15 Spirit Of Adventure
4:00 The Adventures Of The Black Stallion
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Magazine
C'Est Pas Sorcier
5:30 Serie
Fruits Et Legumes
6:00 Documentary
Savoir Plus Sante
7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
Ushuaia
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 You Bet Your Life
8:00 The Secret Of The Treasure Islands
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 True Blue
10:00 News In English
10:25 I'll Take Manhattan Ep. I
11:15 Feature Film - Mesmerised
Starring: Judy Foster & John Lithgow

Wednesday, Dec. 20, 1995

2:00 Inspector Gadget
2:30 Ghost Writer
3:00 The Secret World Of Alex Mac
3:30 Amazing Stories
4:00 The Adventures Of The Black Stallion
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 Jeux
Trophee Campus
7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Anything For A Laugh
8:00 The Nature Of Things
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Star Trek - The Next Generation
10:00 News In English
10:25 Prism
10:45 Law And Order
11:30 The Silk Road
12:30 Second Thoughts

Friday, Dec. 15, 1995

1:00 The Little Mermaid
1:30 Beethoven
1:45 Lift-Off
2:00 Bush School
2:25 Super Carrier
3:15 Goldrush In Alaska
4:05 Movies, Games And Videos
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Telefilm
7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
7:15 Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Short Story Cinema
8:00 Natural Wonders Of Europe
8:45 America's Funniest people
9:15 Wolf
10:00 News In English
10:25 Second Chances (Drama) Part 4
11:30 Feature Film - Out On The Edge
Starring: Rick Schroder & Mary Kay

Saturday, Dec. 16, 1995

2:00 Back To The Future
2:30 Harry And The Hendersons
3:00 Blue Heelers
3:30 Only In Hollywood
4:00 The Adventures Of The Black Stallion
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Fractales
5:30 Magazine
OmniSciences
6:00 Drama
Cest Mon Histoire
7:00 Le Journal
Magazine
Fant Pas Rever
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Major Dad
8:00 First Flights
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Star Trek - The Next Generation
10:00 News In English
10:25 Feature Film - Glory Days
Starring: Robert Conrad & Jennifer O'Neill
11:50 L'histoire Secrete Du Petrole

Sunday, Dec. 17, 1995

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Joshua Jones
2:40 Droopy Master Detective
3:15 Family Playhouse
3:40 Pugwall's Summer
4:00 The Adventures Of The Black Stallion
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Fractales
5:30 Serie
Fruits Et Legumes
6:00 Documentary
Mille Ans D Civilisation

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

MOHAMMAD A. SHUQAIR

MEMORY DRILL

— You are given only one minute to study the following words pertaining to government. Try to memorise them. They count 22.

Democracy, autocracy, despotism, aristocracy, bureaucracy, oligarchy, plutocracy, theocracy, hierarchy, episcopacy, statocracy, hagiarchy, kakistocracy, autonomy, politics, referendum, regen, interregnum, consort, revolution, census, statistics.

To put your memory to test, show how many of the above words your memory can store.

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** Can you show me the way to the post office, please?
Hal tastati an torceni at-tareeq el maktabil bareed, min fadlik?

** You cannot leave this room until you get permission.
La tastati an toghadir hathheil ghurfa hatta tahsul ala tasreeh.

** I always feel tired at the end of the day.
Ash'urr da'imani bit'ta'ab fee nehayatinmahar.

** I don't want to be involved in this unpleasant affair.
La oreed an atawarrat fee hathhil mas'ala al-muz'taja.

** I think someone is knocking at the door. Let him in.
Azonoo anna shakhsan yatraquq bab. Adkhilhu.

** You should use petrol to get those spots off.
Yajeb an tasta'mell al-banzen le'izalatil boqa.

** His instructions were not quite clear.
Lam takon taleematohu wadiha tamaman.

** Mr. Simpson was appointed principal of the school.
Laqad oyvena al-sayed Simpson mudeeran lil-madrassa.

** You're mistaken, so am I.
Anta ghaltan wakathalika ana.

JOKES

THE INSOLVENT: "Today I'll buy an irco safe for keeping mooey."
THE BALD: "I'll also purchase a comb and hair cream."

WIFE: "If I hadn't married you, your life would have been empty."
HUSBAND: "That's right. If I hadn't married you, my wallet would have been full!"

MY doctor told me that eating garlic would reduce my

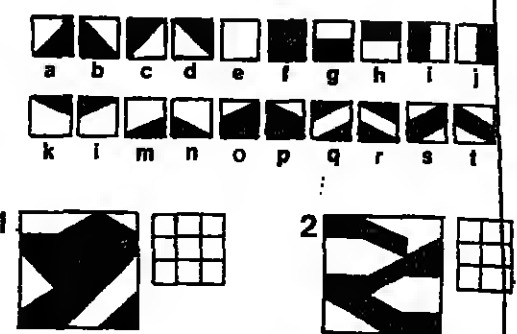
weight.
"Did you actually lose weight?"
"No, but my friends have become less in number."

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. The Egyptian god Anubis had the head of an animal. Which animal?
2. Which race of people is considered to be the tallest in the world?
3. What famous porcelain is marked with crossed swords?
4. What fish would you be eating if you were given Brochet au Beurre blanc?
5. The Spanish Government moves from Madrid to which city during the summer months.
6. Captain Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands. What were they originally called?

PUZZLES

Each design below is made up of the little squares, lettered a to t. In the grid to the right of each design the letters of the squares that form the design. Each square may be used repeatedly.



THOUGHTS FOR THIS WEEK

If a religion is unpatriotic, it ain't right — *Harrate Arnaw, American author (1908-1986).*

It is difficult to give children a sense of security unless you have it yourself. If you have it, they catch it from you — *William C. Menninger American scientist, physician, engineer (1899-1960).*

A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small bundle — *Benjamin Franklin, U.S. statesman (1706-1790).*

The only sure thing about luck is that it will change — *Bret Harte, American author and journalist (1836-1902).*

Let us be thankful for the fools, but for the rest of us could not succeed — *Mark Twain (1835-1910).*



New star on the walk of fame

Iran actor Ray Winstone receives congratulatory kisses from granddaughters, 12 (left) and Sarah, 10, after Winstone's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame unveiled on Dec. 8. Winstone, a Tony and Emmy award recipient is currently featured on the television series Pickett Fences. He also appeared in My Favourite Trian (Renter photo)

Ralph Fiennes — the thinking moviegoer's leading man

By Ted Anthony
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — He has mastered Hamlet, the coldest of Nazis to life and Americans take a hard look at their ally heretofore television generation through an erudite whiz kid gone astray. Ask actor Ralph Fiennes, veteran of don's Royal Shakespeare Company, if movie captures his imagination. Right, and two unexpected words emerge in his mouth in a buttery British cadence: *minator II*.

Fiennes found that an amazing movie, "says Fiennes, 32. "It was reworking the themes of hell and heaven — this evil monster's set to destroy and the force of good resists it. It was classic."

In a recent gloomy afternoon, the heart-kingly handsome and brooding Brit won a Tony for playing Hamlet on Broadway this year sips English breakfast stares out a skyscraper window and dissects the finer points of Schwarzenegger's.

On occasion is his own foray into science. Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*. In it plays Lenny Nero, an ex-L.A. Cop with greasy hair, two-day stubble and poly-outfits who traffics sporadically in a technology dubbed "squid tapes" — people's actual experiences, sexual and otherwise, recorded digitally on diskette and sold illegally for vicarious fun. The movie takes place entirely on Dec. 30 and 31, 1999.

With many of his roles, Fiennes (his name is pronounced "Rafe Fines," per old Irish) incarnates Lenny as an ethereal figure who wanders through the film, whether to choose good or evil.

Fiennes likes it that way — the moral ambiguity of "sort-of" and "kind-of" characters with inherent goodness that is corroded by the world.

"I love flawed heroes," Fiennes says. "I'm a great fan of them. They're just the people that interest me."

There are other two well-known movie roles, if heroes, certainly had their flaws.

Fiennes' first big-time American movie role Amos Goeth, the pot-bellied, nasty-souled Nazi commandant in the 1993 Academy Award-winning *Schindler's List*. He played the villainous and the repugnance — and sequent admiration — of audiences.

Last year, he portrayed another real-life hero — Charles Van Doren — in *Vertigo*. Redford's Quiz Show. Van Doren, son of one of America's most famous literary and intellectual families, earned fame and misfortune as a network pawn on the television game-show scandals of the 1950s. Redford has said he chose Van Doren after seeing in his eyes "pain, vulnerability and intelligence."

When Fiennes is not acting, those scenes come through. He is kind of ethereal self, just to be in the man's presence is a range experience. He has the odd effect of slowing down time — an hourlong interview feels like three — and his words often

trail off into reveries of self-contemplation. Forever elusive, he bristles when asked even the most unpey of personal questions about his upbringing and his life at home. He makes no mention of actress Alex Kingston, his wife of several years; news reports days later will say they have separated.

He lights up — if one can call it that — only when asked about the intricacies of his craft and the characters he portrays.

"I'm interested in the way that fundamental goodness in people can win or lose against human fallibility and weakness — about the people who make mistakes, the weaker people, those who can somehow survive their faults," Fiennes says.

"Hamlet is the quintessential version of that. It's seemingly clear what his course of action is, yet he's constantly examining his inability to take action."

Fiennes, who finished Hamlet in July, is shooting a new film, *The English Patient*, in Italy and North Africa. It is, he says, a film about "four people with a past who come together in a World War II setting."

He plays a desert explorer, a distant man — surprise — nursing an obsession about what the desert does to people, how it reduces and denudes them.

"I don't know why I always end up playing these remote men," Fiennes says. "Maybe I feel some sort of empathy in that. The privacy of some people, I find it attractive; the unknowability of some people is just absolutely intriguing."

He leans back on his hotel-suite couch, almost lying down. His voice is barely above a whisper, too soft to start a voice-activated cassette recorder. He stares off into space and touches his warm teacup to his head.

"Why Lenny?" he asks of his *Strange Days* character. "Lenny isn't a part I would have expected anyone to offer me." Then he zones in on the film's theme — the millennium as the simultaneous apex and nadir of modern culture.

The movie's "squid tapes," he says, are the natural extension of today's frenetic attempts to vicariously live other people's lives, whether it be through talk shows, cybersex, the O.J. Simpson trial — or even film, he acknowledges.

"It's like fast food. You go to McDonald's and you get instant taste. Instant gratification. Then it's gone. It's dead fuel. Film in many ways can be like that."

Fiennes says he doesn't want to do what people expect. Yet he cannot escape the sense that if there is a role out there that calls for a haunted, distant, unknowable man, then he's the actor for the job.

"As the millennium draws near, this is a society that's not in the present," he says, and it is unclear whether he is talking about *Strange Days* or speaking in general.

"People are living on used feelings. And if I am as a member of this society am ever going to survive, I've absolutely got to look at who I am and how I view my emotions."

He smiles a thin smile. "Not me in particular," he says, "but me in general."

Rainbow Warrior sinking turned into musical

AUCKLAND (AFP) — A musical on the sinking of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in which former President Francois Mitterrand dismisses New Zealand as a country of sheep is to premiere here next year, one of its co-writers said.

John Reynolds, who wrote *Sink The Warrior* with Shade Smith, will stage the two-hour, 25-song production in March.

"We started writing this about four years ago," Reynolds told AFP. "Then when France started blowing things up again with their nuclear testing we worked to have the show ready for putting on." It's not entirely political — there is a New Zealand love interest written in.

"It's less operatic than *Les Miserables*, more melodic really."

Rainbow Warrior was blown up here on July 10, 1985, by agents of France's Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur (DGSE), killing Greenpeace photographer Fernando Pereira.

Two agents, Alain Mafart and Dominique Prieur, were later arrested, convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 10 years jail. Eighteen months later they were released into French custody.

Sink The Warrior begins in Paris with the DGSE plotting and Mr. Mitterrand, who always denied knowledge of the operation, being dismissive about New Zealand and later joining the chorus line of a song about the DGSE.

"It sends the French up," Reynolds said.

Reynolds said some of the French characters are amusing rather than ominous. In one scene they order champagne at a New Zealand restaurant only to be told the wine comes from Nelson — named after Lord Nelson, the British military leader who defeated the French at the Battle of Trafalgar.

When that is not acceptable, they are offered one from Blenheim, named after a battle won by Britain over France.

Mafart and Prieur came to New Zealand posing as a married couple.

"She says she is doing this for the honour of France and doesn't want to sleep with Mafart and this causes constant friction," Reynolds said.

The love interest revolves around a New Zealand man critical of Greenpeace whose girlfriend wants to join it. They happen to be on the wharf as the bomb goes off.

The musical ends with the bombing and a song about Greenpeace and the environmental cause. It opens at a theatre here on March 6.

"We'll be trying to promote it internationally if it is successful," Reynolds said.

At the Oscars Tight competition for actors, wide open for actresses

By John Horn
The Associated Press

BEVERLY HILLS, California — Martin Scorsese's *Casino* was a heavy Academy Awards favourite — until the Oscar voters actually got a look at the film.

Even though the violent Las Vegas drama opened nationwide on Nov. 22 to mixed reviews, some 900 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences waited to see the film three days later, in the academy's own posh theatre.

The Oscar voters, who tend to be older and prefer gentle dramas such as *Gandhi* and *Forrest Gump*, reportedly were repulsed by the film's four graphic scenes of mobster brutality. At one point in the middle of the film, according to two people in attendance, one overwrought academy member stood up, started yelling, "this is a horror," and urged other Oscar voters to protest *Casino* by storming out with him.

When the movie ended, scores of people had walked out and the once-crowded auditorium was barely three-quarters full, the two voters say. The film's final credits were greeted by boos and catcalls.

The surprising collapse of *Casino*'s Oscar momentum has thrown end-of-the-year awards handicapping upside down. Once considered a likely multiple nominee for best picture, best actor (for Robert De Niro), best actress (for Sharon Stone) and best director (for Scorsese), *Casino* now may only earn cinematography, costume and adapted screenplay selections.

Nominations for the 68th Academy Awards will not be announced until Feb. 13, but already the major studios and several independents are busy trying to drum up Oscar interest. In the early blitz, Miramax has mailed voters videocassettes of *The Postman* and New Line Cinema has sent out videos of *Seven*, *My Family* and *Don Juan Demarco*. Paramount will mail cassettes of *Losing Isaiah*, *Braveheart* and *Home For The Holidays*, and Warner Bros. is readying tapes of *Les Miserables* and *Boys On The Side*, among several other titles.

Some of the categories — particularly best actor — are particularly competitive this year. There is little consensus on probable best picture selections. Sensing an opening in that top category, Disney recently moved its *Richard Dreyfuss* film, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, from a planned Jan. 19 debut to an Oscar-qualifying run beginning Dec. 22.

Several highly touted films have yet to be released, so academy members interviewed for this article based some early forecasts on a film's "buzz," rather than its real content. But when one studio says a rival's movie is likely to be nominated, you listen.

PICTURE: There's a lot of support building for both *Apollo 13* and *The American President*, probably the only

two safe bets for best picture. Both are classic Oscar films, "serious" and entertaining at the same time. Only a handful of people have seen *Oliver Stone's Nixon*, opening Dec. 20, and the early word-of-mouth is not overwhelming.

Contenders include *Get Shorty*, *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Sense And Sensibility* (Dec. 13) and *Waiting To Exhale* (Dec. 22). Longshots: *Toy Story*, *The Little Princess* and the remake of *Subrina*.

BEST ACTOR: The real drama in this category is whether Tom Hanks will be nominated for the third straight year (he's won twice in a row) for *Apollo 13*. Michael Douglas seems certain to be nominated for *The American President*. John Travolta should be in the race again for *Get Shorty*. Laurence Fishbourne is getting attention for *Othello* (Dec. 14) and Anthony Hopkins should be picked for *Nixon* even if the film isn't a hit. Challengers in the jammed category include the late Massimo Troisi for *The Postman*, Nicolas Cage for *Leaving Las Vegas*, Morgan Freeman in *Seven*, De Niro for *Casino*, Denzel Washington for *Devil In A Blue Dress*, Harrison Ford in *Sabrina* and Dreyfuss for *Mr. Holland's Opus*. Dark horses: Jonathan Pryce for *Carrington* and Kevin Spacey for *The Usual Suspects*.

BEST ACTRESS: Since Hollywood gives almost all of its best roles to men, this (yet again) is not an especially strong class. Angela Bassett, nominated previously for *What's Love Got To Do With It*, it could be back for *Waiting To Exhale*. Voters may not remember perennial Oscar nominee Meryl Streep for *The Bridges Of Madison County*, which came out early in the year. Some people think Annette Bening has a shot for *The American President*, but she faces a strong challenge from Nicole Kidman for *To Die For*, Elisabeth Shue for *Leaving Las Vegas*, Emma Thompson for *Sense And Sensibility* and Susan Sarandon for *Dead Man Walking* (Dec. 29). Outside contenders: Jennifer Jason Leigh (*Georgia*), Minnie Driver (*Circle Of Friends*), Sandra Bullock (*While You Were Sleeping*) and Michelle Pfeiffer (*Dangerous Minds*).

SUPPORTING ACTOR: Ed Harris is a likely pick for *Apollo 13*, as is Delroy Lindo for *Clockers*. Joe Pesci could be nominated for *Casino*, and two actors — Gene Hackman and Dennis Farina — will gather a lot of votes for *Get Shorty*.

SUPPORTING ACTRESS: One of the most unpredictable categories right now. Joan Allen's turn as Pat Nixon in *Nixon* will be on many ballots, as will Mira Sorvino for *Mighty Aphrodite*. Mary Louise Parker could get a nomination for *Boys On The Side*, as could Anne Bancroft for *Home For The Holidays*. Look for at least one Zinger in the category.

Movie-mimicking torching unleashes fresh jabs at Hollywood

By Frederic Bichon
Agence France Presse

NEW YORK — A New York City subway attack mimicking a scene from the movie *Money Train* has unleashed a fresh tirade from U.S. conservatives against Hollywood's portrayal of violence in film.

The latest onslaught came from Republican Senate leader and presidential contender Robert Dole who claimed the U.S. movie-making establishment in Hollywood must be held accountable for the real-life violence he said it has inspired.

"There is no excuse for criminal behaviour... but at the same time, those who work in Hollywood's corporate suits must also be willing to accept their share of the blame," Sen. Dole said in remarks to the Senate Monday.

Harry Kaufman, a 50-year-old subway clerk was badly burned in the early hours Sunday when two

men sprayed flammable liquid in his booth and ignited it.

The attack left Kaufman in critical condition at a New York City hospital with second- and third-degree burns over 80 per cent of his body.

City officials, including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, suggested at a news conference Monday that the perpetrators may have staged a copycat attack after having seen the hit film *Money Train* currently showing in New York.

The Republican leader, who has accused Hollywood of polluting American values with violent films and rap music, called for a boycott of the movie.

"For those in the entertainment industry who too often engage in pornography and violence as a way to sell movie tickets, it's time for a serious soul-searching," Sen. Dole said.

Money Train, an action film starring Woody

Harrelson and Wesley Snipes, features a number of scenes that were shot in the New York subway system.

In the thriller, a sadistic pyromaniac named "Torch" twice sprays subway token clerks with gasoline, strikes a match and immolates them.

New York Transit Authority official Kenneth Donohue said there had been nine such torchings over the past five years, one of which was fatal in 1988.

His account contradicted comments from other city officials that the wave of torchings took place in the late 1980s and had since stopped.

New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton said "it has been seven years since we have had an incident. It is a strong coincidence that within the last week, a movie opened in this city that has several scenes depicting this type of incident."

Columbia Pictures, which

produced *Money Train*, said in a statement that it was "appalled and dismayed" by the attack but it did not address the parallels being drawn between the film and the real-life torching.

Actors Harrelson and Snipes apparently felt that the public outrage was strong enough to warrant a response.

"My prayers are with Harry Kaufman and his family," said Snipes in a statement.

"I feel terrible for Mr. Kaufman and his family. I'm sure the movie didn't create the mentality of the men who perpetrated this crime, but still I feel remorseful and deeply saddened by what happened," said Harrelson.

Harrelson starred in the controversial movie about violence and the media titled *Natural Born Killers* which critics charged had inspired a teenager from Utah to kill his step mother and half sister in October 1994.

British band overcomes critical broadsides

By Dean Goodman
Reuters

LOS ANGELES — Bush is the band that can't be stopped. Dodging critical broadsides from music industry hotshots, the British quartet has managed to sell two million copies of its debut album to a wide cross-section of fans.

Beginning with *Everything Zen*, three singles have enjoyed massive U.S. radio airplay, with the most recent one, *Comedown*, spending two weeks atop billboard magazine's modern rock chart. The current single, the string-laden ballad *Glycerine*, went to radio this month, almost a year after the album *Sixteen Stone* (Trauma/Interscope), was released. Several more singles may follow, by which time the band will be in sessions for their next album with producer Steve Albini, the hardcore punk veteran.

Through deft marketing and hard work, Bush has carved out a niche in the music industry. Their fast rise has provoked a predictable backlash, with some critics saying they're derivative, they're corporate grunge, they've got no credibility, no die-hard fan base. But such brickbats are a rite of passage in rock-'n'-roll.

"Obviously there's going to be a faction that says, 'oh, I hate them because they're successful,'" reasons Bush singer and guitarist Gavin Rossdale, 28, killing time backstage before a recent concert here. "But judging where we came from and what we've done, maybe someone might say, 'that's all right, it's totally cool, they worked for it.'"

And the numbers are on their side. The album is sitting comfortably in the top 40, having peaked at 17.

The Bush recipe is deceptively simple: start with some nifty tunes, add some grunge (first taking out the angst), some literary pretensions and a dollop of British irony.

But of course, even the most brilliant album can sink without trace if a band doesn't tour incessantly in support of it. This is very expensive, and in the last few years, British bands have decided it would be easier to conquer America by handishing rave reviews from home instead of crisscrossing the continent in an old minivan.

The road to rock-'n'-roll stardom is accordingly littered with the corpses of bands such as Blur, Suede and the Stone roses who generated a buzz that did not translate into record sales. Even Oasis, who enjoyed some success last year, have seen their second album slide down the U.S. charts.

But Bush, because they

were unknown at home — and remain much more popular in the United States than in Europe — had no choice but to start out from scratch.

"What you have to be doing is playing all the clubs so all the people see us right close up and are coming up on stage and stage-diving," Rossdale says. "We had 2-1/2 months of that crazy and every place we played was every place that every big band in America had played..."

From there, Bush graduated to music festivals and slightly bigger clubs, before doing a round of American theatres. The band won a broad-based following, ranging from teenagers to twentysomething fans.

Rossdale formed the band, which comprises lead guitarist Nigel Pulsford, bass player Dave Parsons and drummer Robin Goodridge, two years ago in London.

Europarliament okays Turkey deal

STRASBOURG (Agencies) — The European Parliament voted on Wednesday to let a customs union linking the European Union (EU) and Turkey go ahead, but made clear it did so reluctantly.

The European Parliament... has given its assent," Parliament President Klaus Jaensch said after a vote in which 343 deputies voted in favour, 149 against and 36 abstained.

Before the vote, European Parliament members indicated many had voted in favour because they felt to reject Ankara would be to set back Turkish moves on human rights and democracy.

Socialist group President Pauline Green said many were voting "with sorrow, with heavy hearts and without enthusiasm."

Many deputies, who had threatened to veto or postpone the accord in disapproval of Ankara's human rights record, struggled with their consciences ahead of the vote.

At the end of the day the risks of shutting out Turkey were seen as greater.

Apart from Greece and Israel, Turkey is the only democratic country in the eastern region of the Mediterranean. Turkey is a NATO partner with a market economy and a secular tradition in an unstable part of the world," liberal leader Gijis de ries told the assembly lead of the vote.

"Even if Turkey is on the U.S. borders, it is part of a very complex region. I'm sinking of countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Syria and a list of former Soviet republics," leader of the European People's Party Wilfried Mars said.

Many deputies still voted against the deal on human rights grounds.

French Deputy Jack Lang said in a statement his conscience would not allow him to vote in favour.

"I think that a Europe of human rights should not concede an economic accord with a regime of regression and repression," he said.

Her lobbying trips successful, Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal thanked the

European Parliament for approving the cost deal and said the accord would help her country make progress in human rights and the economy.

President Suleiman Demirel also hailed the pact with the European Union as a "historical step in Turkish-European relations."

But random, "man-in-the-street" interviews indicated some Turks were sceptical about what benefits the pact might bring to their everyday lives.

The customs union, to begin Jan. 1, gives Turkey the closest links with the EU short of membership by knocking down trade barriers in all fields except agricultural products and steel.

Ms. Ciller linked her reelection campaign with the customs union, arguing that Turkish integration with the West would discourage the rise of Turkey's pro-Islamic party in parliamentary elections later this month.

The European Parliament has made a separate resolution which called for Turkey to make human rights reforms and solve the Kurdish issue without violence. The Turkish government has been at war with Kurdish guerrillas in the southeast since 1984.

Mr. Demirel and Ms. Ciller did not refer to the resolution.

"We thank the European Parliament for the approval despite all the anti-Turkish propaganda," Ms. Ciller said.

"Our goal is to carry our country to the most advanced level in Europe in every field... including democracy, human rights, economy and social life," she added.

Turkey's state television, which broadcast the European Parliament's debate, cut away from the programme when deputies mentioned the human rights and Kurdish problems.

In the long-term, a customs union could boost production and bring new jobs with the rise of foreign investments in Turkey. The quality and choice of consumer goods should also improve.

But the short-term effects are expected to be painful for Turkey.

Premier rejects criticism

(Continued from page 1)

deputies I said that the court would be formed of civil judges."

The State Security Court is now formed of three military judges. The prime minister or the prosecutors' office has the power to redesignate judges, military or civil or both. The number of judges ranges between three and five.

Jawad Yuois, Mr. Shbeilat's lawyer, said he hoped that the case would not be referred to court. However, he claimed that there was procrastination in the investigation process to "force Mr. Shbeilat to confess to a crime he did not commit."

Mr. Yunis said he filed an application for bail for Mr. Shbeilat on Wednesday but it was not approved or denied. Nine opposition parties protested the detention of

Mr. Shbeilat and called for his immediate release saying he was "a prisoner of conscience." In a statement issued on Wednesday, the parties described the detention as a violation of the "normal legal procedures."

The statement linked Mr. Shbeilat's case with a case filed this week against the Jordan People's Democratic Party charging it with having links with a foreign group. It was also linked with the government's intention to introduce amendments to the Press and Publications Law that will give the government the power to close down newspapers and imprison journalists if they violated the law.

"Resorting to dialogue and referring to the Constitution ensure a democratic life and political stability," the statement said. "We, as opposition parties, are with democracy, stability and the rule of the law."

Iran faces tougher U.S. sanctions

(Continued from page 1)

go to the full Senate for a vote as is aid will be approved.

"The current measure co-sponsored by Democratic Senator Paul Sarbanes — who consulted with the White House — scales down the number of sanctions that could be imposed."

Washington has tried unsuccessfully to line up European support for the blockade. The Senate bill would target foreign as well as domestic firms that supply equipment, services or financial support for Iran's oil sector.

Under the legislation, Mr. Clinton could strike at the financial backing of companies dealing with Iran by threatening potential lenders with a cutoff in Federal Reserve funds.

Other potential sanctions include the denial of assistance from the Export-Import Bank and bans on exports of offending U.S. companies.

"We can wait no longer. We must put real teeth in our policy," Mr. D'Amato said, adding that the sanctions would end once the Iranians show they "want to come into the community of nations, work with us, live with us in

peace."

Responding to the vote, Iranian deputy foreign minister Abbas Maleki told a Tehran press conference that increased sanctions "will have no long term impact" on Iran.

"The vote shows that the U.S. policy of hostility against Iran is getting tougher and becoming more permanent," he said, adding that the Iranian leaders would "have to take the appropriate measures to counter this policy."

The French oil company Total, which signed a \$600 million contract with Iran in July to develop the offshore Sirri oil fields in the Gulf, recently said there was no legal basis for U.S. sanctions on its business dealings with Tehran.

The legislation gives the U.S. president four options for penalising foreign companies.

He could bar U.S. Export-Import Bank assistance to a targeted company, ban exports of U.S. equipment to that company, block loans of more than \$10 million a year by U.S. banks, to the company or restrict foreign financial institutions involved in Iran's oil sector from dealing in U.S. government securities.

Bosnia agreement to be signed today

(Continued from page 1)

had been made to the Serbs to win their release — France had simply threatened Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic with the reimposition of U.N. trade sanctions. Mr. Milosevic was the first of the key ex-Yugoslav leaders to arrive in Paris on Wednesday.

The agreement, reached after marathon talks in Dayton, will split Bosnia almost equally between Serbs and a Muslim-Croat alliance under a loose central government. French President Jacques Chirac will host Thursday's

full-pomp signing ceremony with 50 states and international organisations at his Elysee presidential palace in Paris.

But with roads into the French capital blocked by long-running transport strikes, Wednesday's meetings were moved to the abbey near Paris's Roissy airport.

The ministers discussed the Islamic World's role in ensuring that peace sticks, both by contributing to the 60,000 strong NATO-led peace force and helping pay for rebuilding Bosnia.

French officials said the presence in Bosnia of hundreds of Foreign Muslim fighters, some from Iran, could also be an issue. Bosnia's Muslim-led government had pledged they will leave since the accord requires all foreign forces to go within 30 days.

In Washington, the U.S. Senate on Wednesday rejected a proposal that would have blocked the dispatch of U.S. troops to Bosnia, clearing the way for votes expected to express grudging support for the deployment.

Urged by President Bill Clinton to rally behind the

Bosnia peace operation, the Senate rejected the negative measure and beaded for votes later in the day on resolutions explicitly if reluctantly supporting the troops involved.

The defeated measure would have prohibited the dispatch of military peacekeepers to Bosnia unless Congress approved the funding for it. It was passed by the House of Representatives, where opposition to the mission is stronger, last month, although Mr. Clinton would surely have vetoed the measure had the Senate approved it.

Israel and Syria raise hopes for accord

(Continued from page 1)

completing the "comprehensive peace" in the Middle East that all sides say they want.

One factor in the equation is Israel's next elections, due by October. Mr. Peres is an even more vigorous advocate of peace than was his predecessor Yitzhak Rabin but has less of a reputation among the Israeli public as a champion of Israel's security.

Mr. Peres is offering to withdraw Israeli troops from South Lebanon in hopes of breaking the ice between Israel and Syria and paving the way to peace treaties with both northern neighbours, reports said.

Such a move, which Mr. Peres reportedly proposed to President Clinton, would imply Israeli recognition of the Syrian role in Lebanon, where Damascus keeps some 40,000 troops.

Maariv also quoted Israeli government sources as saying Saudi Arabia has indicated it would make peace with Israel as soon as Syria signed a treaty with the Jewish state.

That report could not be immediately confirmed but it was in line with Peres' new sweeping vision of an Israeli-Syrian peace that also embraces most of the Arab World and in effect ends the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Speaking during a stopover in Morocco on the way back from Washington, Mr. Peres said Wednesday that he was convinced "with every fiber of my being" that Israel and Syria would reach peace.

"The doubt I have is ... whether it will take one year or three," he said in comments broadcast on Israel's army radio.

The Haaretz daily said Mr. Peres offered to recognise Syria's de facto role in Lebanon and withdraw Israeli troops from an enclave in South Lebanon in exchange for a promise the area would not be used to launch attacks on the Jewish state.

Lebanese President Elias Hrawi said Wednesday his country would not reopen talks with Israel until it received a timetable for an Israeli troop pullout.

"Lebanon and Syria want details. We want issues to be clear. The trouble has always been in the details," Mr. Hrawi was quoted as saying by Lebanon's National News Agency.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a close Syrian ally, said if Mr. Peres was sincere about peace, he would translate his offer into practical steps to defuse tension in South Lebanon.

A senior Syrian official said in Damascus that Mr. Peres peace goals were welcome but that Israel must say it is willing to withdraw entirely from the Golan Heights.

Israel's Jerusalem Post newspaper, quoting officials in the U.S. Administration, said Mr. Christopher would offer Syria four negotiating formats, including a summit of the style used to forge peace between Israel and Egypt at Camp David in

1978. Meeting over several days at the U.S. presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland, in 1978, the leaders of Egypt, Israel and the United States broke a stalemate in peace talks, hammering out interim accords that led to a treaty in 1979.

Syrian Government-run newspapers were unusually upbeat Wednesday about Mr. Peres call, in a speech to Congress, to Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to mutually make "demanding decisions" en route to peace.

The Tishrin daily described Mr. Peres' speech as "positive and worthy of attention."

Al Baath said it "re-kindled hopes" for reviving the stalled Syrian-Israeli talks.

Tishrin said: "Peres has announced really important and positive proposals showing the prime minister has taken a great forward which will ensure a better atmosphere to advance the region towards an era of peace and progress."

"The peace process, which has suffered several crises in the past four years, is currently moving into a new stage," the paper said.

Christopher due here next week

(Continued from page 1)

raised by Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres in his meeting with President Bill Clinton at the White House on Monday.

Several senior American military officials visited Jordan over the past months, and it is generally expected that the issue of U.S. assistance to Jordao's Armed Forces has reached an advanced stage although precise details are not available.

Mr. Christopher's meeting with Mr. Arafat will take place Saturday in the autonomous West Bank town of Jericho, Arafat spokesman Nabil Abu Irdeineh said.

They will discuss (Israel's) redeployment from Palestinian cities (and) the role of the United States in supporting the Palestinian people politically and economically," he added.

In Washington, Mr. Peres said Tuesday he had asked members of the U.S. Congress to put aside their squabbles over foreign aid to allow for rapid passage of a bill granting aid to the Palestinians.

"I put, in the strongest terms, the need to support the Palestinian cause," Mr. Peres told a news conference here, adding: "It is important for peace."

The House of Representatives last month approved the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act, which allows for about \$500 million in aid over five years to Palestinian self-government authorities.

But the measure contained in a sweeping foreign aid authorisation bill has been bogged down in negotiations between the Senate and the House over a separate debate on abortion.

Ring in the New Year

Celebrate Motorola's
LOWER PRICES at FastLink

The Motorola GSM Micro T.A.C. 8200
in 3 packages to suit your needs

#1 International 8200 (Basic) reduced by JD 90
includes 2 Batteries and Rapid Charger

#2 International 8200 (Standard) reduced by JD 100
includes 2 Batteries and Rapid Charger

#3 International 8200 (Premium) reduced by JD 110
includes Lithium Battery and Rapid Charger

and express exchange service. All phones sold by
FastLink are guaranteed by Motorola.

For more information please call



MOTOROLA

GSM



Fastlink

Jordan Mobile Telephone Services

863750

imageNET

Arab countries joining ambitious stocks project

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Two more Arab states have joined an ambitious stocks project set up by the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) to link regional bourses and encourage cross-border investment, operators said Wednesday.

Saudi Arabia and Egypt have been linked to the computerised stocks database along with six other Arab nations, AMF chairman, Jassim Al Manai, said.

"Egypt and Saudi Arabia have just joined the database network while there are contacts with other members to link them," Mr. Manai said in a statement after a meeting of the AMF board at its Abu Dhabi headquarters.

The network was established four years ago to link stock markets in Arab countries as part of the AMF's drive to develop regional bourses and encourage reforms to tackle economic problems, including slow growth rates, debt, inflation, and deficits in the budget and balances of payments.

The network, set up with help from the World Bank's International Finance Corporation, gathers information about share moves, prices, supply and demand, performance of trading institutions and other economic indicators and distributes them to all linked stock exchanges.

It also distributes periodic analyses of each exchange and data on economic indicators in member states.

The other six members that have been linked to the base over the past two years are Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco,

Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait. The AMF, the Arab League's main financial organisation, has urged member states without official exchanges to open floors so they will be linked to the network and attract investment needed to revive their sluggish economies.

More than 2,500 banks and companies trade their shares in the Arab World but most of the markets have remained dull as dealing is generally confined to nationals and traders tend for long-term investment to ensure fixed income.

In a recent study, the AMF said development of regional bourses was essential for attracting part of the overseas Arab investments, estimated at between \$600 billion and \$800 billion. They are concentrated in the West in bank deposits, real estate and bonds and equities.

Saudi Arabia, the world's oil superpower, does not have a formal stock exchange as it was shut down nearly eight years ago following local Islamic opposition. But share-dealing in the conservative kingdom is conducted through the most sophisticated bank network in the region and turnover is the highest.

The AMF, a regional IMF-style institution, is involved in another project to set up a data network to provide information on regional markets to boost flagging inter-Arab trade, which does not exceed 10 per cent of total trade.

Bank of England cuts interest rate

LONDON (AFP) — The Bank of England cut interest rates Wednesday for the first time in nearly two years in a move aimed at boosting flagging economic growth in Britain.

The bank announced a quarter point cut in its base lending rate from 6.75 per cent to 6.5 per cent, after the monthly meeting on monetary policy between Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke and Bank of England Governor Eddie George.

Mr. Clarke told a news conference that he and Mr. George had agreed that the quarter point reduction in interest rates was a "sensible and prudent move," adding that future changes in rates were likely to be made in "small steps."

Interest rates had been held firmly at 6.75 per cent since February this year after three consecutive rate rises aimed at stamping out

inflationary pressures.

The chancellor said that the weakness of sterling and strong money supply argued against a larger cut.

And he added that figures released earlier Wednesday showing 20,000 decline in November's unemployment total to a four-year low, coupled with strong retail sales, convinced him the smaller cut was sufficient for the economy.

City financiers had argued that without lower borrowing costs, Mr. Clarke would be unable to achieve the three per cent GDP growth in 1996 forecast in his 1996-97 budget.

After powerful export-driven GDP growth of 4.0 per cent in 1994, British economic expansion slowed to 2.1 per cent by the third quarter of this year.

Mr. George, who until Wednesday had consistent-

ly opposed a rate cut on the grounds that this would stoke inflationary pressures, stressed his agreement with Mr. Clarke over the decision to cut rates.

"We believe now that the probabilities have improved of achieving 2.5 per cent (inflation) or less," the central bank chief said. "We are more confident of achieving the target."

Mr. Clarke has committed himself to reducing underlying inflation (retail prices excluding home-loan interest payments) to 2.5 per cent by the end of 1996, or by the spring of 1997 at the latest.

"It's on that basis that we have proposed the reduction in interest rates," Mr. George said.

In Britain, the Bank of England is not independent, and final decisions on monetary policy are taken by the chancellor.

In the bank's last infla-

tion report in November, it argued that the target was likely to be missed if it relaxed monetary policy.

Mr. Clarke also reaffirmed that the rate cut was "fully consistent with meeting the inflation target," adding that "inflation is lower than expected in recent months and cost pressures have eased substantially."

In October, overall inflation plunged to an annual 3.2 per cent from 3.9 per cent the month before, while underlying inflation dipped to 2.9 per cent from 3.1 per cent.

The decision to cut rates had been expected by the markets, after Mr. Clarke's 1996-97 budget last month. He unveiled only modest tax cuts, which analysts predicted would later be followed by a cut in borrowing costs.

But the influential employers' federation, the In-

stitute of Directors, said there was room for further reductions in base rates given the "modest" inflationary pressures.

"This is just what is needed to help the economy, but we would like the chancellor to do more," policy head Ruth Lea said. "The economy has clearly slowed down in recent months," she said. "Manufacturing output is sluggish and retail sales remain subdued despite today's better figures."

Sterling strengthened after the announcement, as City analysts had expected a larger rate cut of at least half a point. At 1230 GMT it was trading at 2.2208 marks from 2.2195 on Tuesday evening.

Several commercial lenders, such as Halifax and Barclays Bank, immediately announced a similar reduction in their home-loan borrowing costs.

Japan GDP likely to grow by 2.5%

TOKYO (R) — Japan's staggering economy will likely grow by about 2.5 per cent next year after four years of negligible growth, a top government official said Tuesday.

The government is also set to revise its forecast for gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the current fiscal year ending in March to just above 1.0 per cent from an earlier estimate of 2.8 per cent, the senior official at the Economic Planning Agency (EPA) told reporters.

"Our official forecast for next year will be around the

middle of a 2.0-3.0 per cent range," the official said. "The figure appears to be a bit higher than average forecasts by private economists, but I think it is fully feasible."

The revised forecasts should be formally adopted next week, the official said. Japan hopes its economy will resume a long-awaited recovery in early 1996, drawing strength from a package of new stimulus steps worth 14 trillion yen (\$140 billion) and a cut in its key lending rate to a record low 0.5 per cent, both adopted in September.

The dollar's recovery to above 101.00 yen — a rise of nearly 30 per cent from its April low — should take some pressure off Japanese manufacturers, now facing fierce global competition mainly from cheaper Asian products.

It would be the fourth year in a row the government has sharply revised down its ini-

tial growth forecast, which is often criticised by the private sector as being too optimistic.

In the year ended March 1995, Japan's GDP grew 0.5 per cent after a rise of 0.2 per cent the previous year — far below initial official forecasts of 2.4 per cent and 3.3 per cent, respectively, government data showed.

The government tends to set higher growth estimates to make its budget deficit look smaller, as the forecast is used to estimate tax revenues for the following year.

But this time, economists said, the finance ministry is trying to put a lid on growth forecasts, out of concern a higher estimate would raise pressure for more fiscal spending.

Most private economists foresee growth of around two per cent or just above for the next fiscal year.

"I think the economy will grow somewhere between 2.2 per cent and 2.4 per cent. This is based on the assump-

tion that the yen will remain at around 101 yen to the dollar," said Takao Oshita of the Wako Research Institute of Economics.

"The effects of the package may emerge slowly, probably in the first half of 1996/97. Due to improving corporate profits, the job situation may improve with better capital investment. But the economy will still lack strength," he said.

Other economists warned the economy, faced with continued inventory cuts and corporate restructuring, may grow well under two per cent.

Andrew Shipley, an economist at Schroder Securities, told Reuters Financial

Television that structural factors remain and these issues should limit growth and prevent the economy from significantly accelerating over the next 12 months.

Mr. Shipley foresees 1.7 per cent GDP growth for 1996/97.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development also warned in a report last week that uncertainties still remain about the strength of Japan's economic upturn.

It said bleak labour prospects may prompt consumers to save more rather than spend, and weak land prices could exacerbate the balance-of-payments problems facing financial-sector firms.

Gold demand rises 29.5% in Middle East and India

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AFP) — An improvement in oil prices boosted gold demand in Saudi Arabia and another key Gulf market by 12 per cent in the first nine months of 1995, the World Gold Council (WGC) has said.

Consumption in the kingdom, the world's oil heavyweight, and neighbouring United Arab Emirates (UAE) rose to 180.2 tonnes from 160.9 tonnes in the first nine months of 1994, WGC said from its Dubai office.

"The steady progress in the Saudi general economic

situation helped by a better price for crude oil contributed to the healthy growth in demand in Saudi Arabia," said Rolf Schneebeli, WGC chief executive for the Middle East and India.

Consumption in Saudi Arabia alone surged by 13 per cent to 152 tonnes in the same period, making it one of the biggest gold markets in the world, Mr. Schneebeli said in a statement.

Dubai, the top gold importer in the region, recorded the biggest ever intake of the yellow metal in the first nine

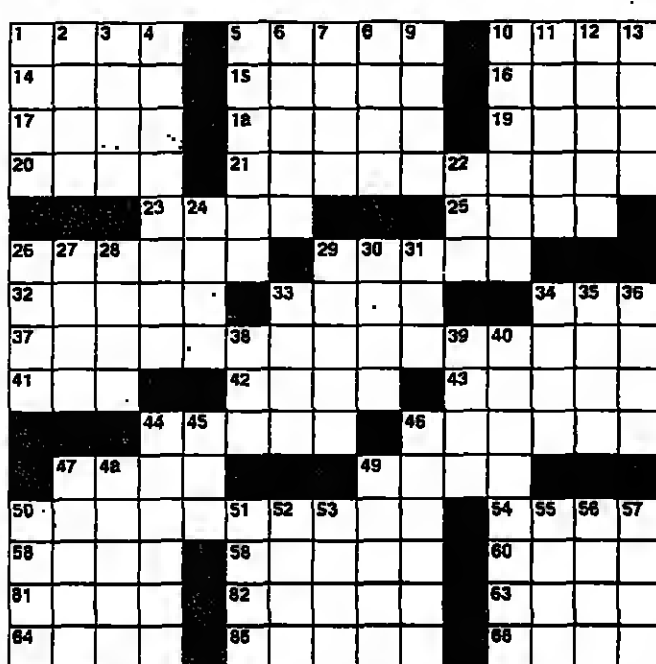
months of 1995, standing at around 344.0 tonnes compared with 185.2 tonnes in the first nine months of 1994.

WGC said the increase was due to higher demand in the Gulf and in India following New Delhi's decision to ease restrictions on gold imports.

"Any increase in the gold consumption in Dubai is a measure of the buoyancy in gold consumption in the whole region," it said. Consumption in India, the biggest gold market in the world, jumped by 26.54 per cent to 365.4 tonnes from 289 tonnes.

THE Daily Crossword by James L. Beatty

- ACROSS
- 1 Reasonable
 - 5 Ford flop
 - 10 The Charles' dog
 - 14 Greenspan or Thicke
 - 15 French income
 - 16 Kind of gun
 - 17 Faxed, perhaps
 - 18 Ham it up
 - 19 Voice votes
 - 20 Scorch
 - 21 Start of quote from "Julius Caesar"
 - 23 Devours
 - 25 TV sitcom, once
 - 26 Rules of conduct
 - 29 Farm buildings
 - 32 Noted violin maker
 - 33 Aria
 - 34 Johnny —
 - 37 Mora of quota
 - 41 Safe haven
 - 42 Pianist Peter
 - 43 Polish money
 - 44 Artist Grandma

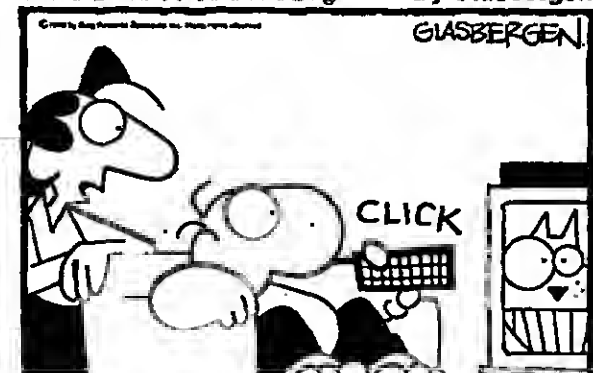


- DOWN
- 1 Fresh talk
 - 2 Away from the wind
 - 3 Zola work
 - 4 Plea
 - 5 Builds
 - 6 Display models
 - 7 — job (flattery)
 - 8 James or Kell
 - 9 Lecher's expression
 - 10 Vast chasms
 - 11 Soft leather
 - 12 Retinue
 - 13 Vaulted church recess
 - 22 Ouayle or Rather
 - 24 Landed
 - 26 "I Remember —"
 - 27 Gen. Bradley
 - 28 — and tile
 - 29 Dutch colonists in Africa
 - 30 As well
 - 31 A Reiner
 - 33 Capt. Hook's male
 - 34 Cheer
 - 35 Art deco artist
 - 36 Tunisian rulers
 - 38 Chosen ones
 - 39 Pound, the poet
 - 40 Lighted torch
 - 44 Half
 - 45 Finished, to poets
 - 46 Earthy pigments
 - 47 Classic Western
 - 48 Spiral
 - 49 — throat
 - 50 So
 - 51 Fathers
 - 52 Basso Pinza
 - 53 Distinctive quality
 - 55 Holiday periods
 - 56 Withered
 - 57 Walked on

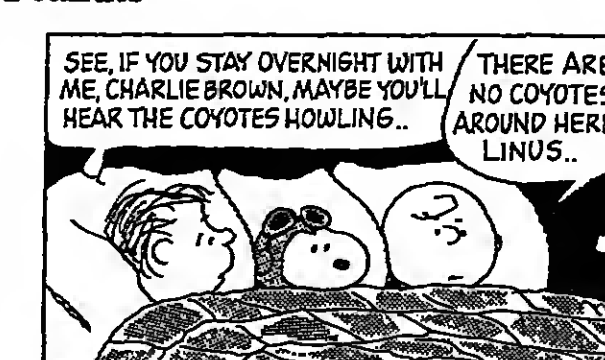
Yesterday's puzzle solved:



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



Peanuts



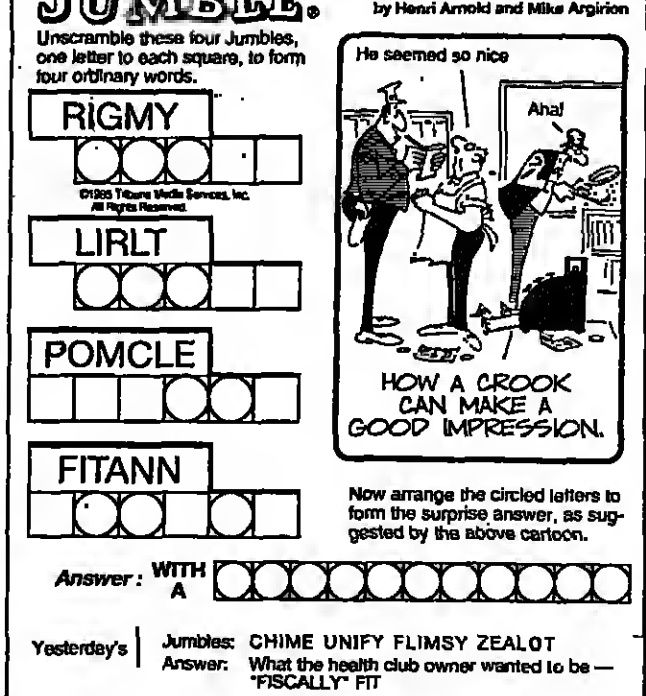
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Find out what others expect of you at home today, and then try to please them. Take no risks where your reputation is concerned.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be more direct in correspondence today since ambiguity could cause you trouble later tonight. Don't waste time foolishly.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Avoid activities which yield nothing but loss and concentrate on the proven and constructive kind. Do something kind for your mate.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Go after that personal wish in the right way in the morning, and you can get it. Avoid problems with good friends.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be sure to study every phase of any problem before you try to solve it. One you love may complain, so be understanding.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You may feel confused this morning, so be sure what it is really you want before going after it tonight.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) Do not give a higher-up a disagreement this morning, and then everything works out smoothly for you.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) This morning is not good for making any changes or you could later get into serious trouble. Use your good judgment.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Don't disagree over some account this morning, but busy and study it carefully for possible error.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be more considerate of partners who are moody at this time and all goes well. Be careful in motion of any kind.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Study every phase of your career, and then you can handle it wisely and please higher-ups by your efforts.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Where delay may arise today where entertainment is concerned. Show devotion to your mate even though he or she is demanding.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Study the tasks which need to be completed at home, and handle them efficiently. Do not disagree with kin. Be sure to get your bills paid.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be more objective today when dealing with associates and get better results, also acknowledge letters graciously.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You are not thinking quite straight today so do nothing which is of importance, but take under advisement.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If somebody tries to hurt your feelings, do not disagree but walk away briskly. This is not a good day to try to see adamant friends.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A private affair is bothering you and you are confused about how to handle it, so wait awhile before doing so.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You are meeting up with some opposition to a plan you have for gaining what you desire, so figure out how best to get over that annoyance.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) Handle outside matters very conscientiously today and don't jeopardize your good name in any way or there could be problems.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Go ahead with that plan you have been working on today and get good results, but don't make any radical changes.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A report could require some changes, so be sure to make it and be accurate. Do not ink a good friend in some way.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be gentle with an emotional disturbed associate today or there could be a severance of connections. Be more thoughtful of others.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You may find tasks boring today but handle them quickly and efficiently and they are soon completed. Be at home tonight with your loved one.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Be content with inexpensive pleasures today, otherwise you could spend a lot and get little in return towards your progress.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311

Lebanon plans financial markets supervisory body

BEIRUT (R) — The Lebanese government has taken a step towards modernising the Beirut financial markets by approving a proposal to create an overall supervisory body and a special court to handle market disputes.

The two bodies, designed to ensure full supervision and transparency of Lebanon's re-emerging financial markets, are proposed in a draft law the cabinet approved in principle last week.

The draft "on organising the Beirut Stock Exchange and capital markets" also proposes privatising the Beirut Stock Exchange which is preparing to reopen in January after a 12-year shutdown and is currently run by a government-appointed committee.

"This draft is a clear indication to the markets that we are serious about overhauling our legislation according to international

standards," a government official told Reuters.

The government of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri delayed sending the draft to parliament, which must approve it, in order to allow ministers who proposed amendments at last week's cabinet meeting time to present them in writing.

Justice Minister Bahji Tabara will decide which amendments are to be included in the draft.

It is the result of 18 months' discussions involving government ministries and the central bank, the government official said. He expected it to take another 12-18 months to get the draft through parliament and then set up the new bodies.

The main principle of the proposed legislation is the need to separate trading from other responsibilities by creating a market supervisory committee like France's COB (Bourse Op-

erations Commission) and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the draft says.

The "committee of the bourse and other financial markets," the proposed supervisory agency, will be a professional body of seven fulltime members appointed by government decree.

It will be responsible for approving the establishment, rules and supervising committees of all markets including the Beirut Stock Exchange, their regulations on brokers and on the circulation of financial instruments.

The committee will be empowered to stop trading on all markets and in specific instruments when necessary.

It will examine the transparency of information of financial instruments offered for subscription or circulation and on the institutions issuing them.

To deter insider trading

it will ensure there is no delay in companies and institutions issuing information that could affect prices and it will have power to oblige them to submit additional or corrected information, the draft adds.

The committee will also monitor all markets and

refer any violators to specialised disciplinary boards or courts.

The proposed "special court for the bourse and other financial markets" will be a three-member tribunal comprising a senior judge, a lawyer specialised

in financial cases and a financial expert.

It will deal with all disputes arising from market operations and all appeals against decisions taken by the supervisory committee and other bodies managing financial markets.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN				
TELEPHONE: 567171 / 567175				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 13/12/1995				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
ADAR BANK P.L.C.	880	212600	238.500	240.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	39725	174123	4.360	4.580
BANK OF JORDAN	1000	3765	3.750	3.900
KIDDAE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	8750	40079	1.120	1.180
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	375	700	2.500	2.600
CIR HOUSING BANK	13780	68508	4.710	4.760
JORDAN GULF BANK	47580	84127	1.090	1.140
ADAR JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	12750	6563	3.750	3.760
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	1900	908	3.470	3.640
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	24200	82344	3.300	3.470
BEIT REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	5300	20800	3.920	3.940
ADAR BANK FOR INVESTMENT	161500	151876	9.40	9.50
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	66100	106083	1.510	1.560
BANKS SECTOR	353680	877611	INDEX NUMBER: 190.99	CHANGE: +1.352
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	2900	7992	2.750	2.770
YAMOUK INSURANCE & REINSURANCE	1000	3000	3.000	3.000
THE NORTHWEST A.S.I.A. INSURANCE	980	2967	3.020	3.050
AL-KHAR AL-ARABI INSURANCE	1000	4750	4.750	4.750
INSURANCE SECTOR	5600	18999	INDEX NUMBER: 130.76	CHANGE: +0.672
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	169900	309246	1.780	1.820
AMMO DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	260	318	1.210	1.270
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	450	2185	2.830	2.860
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	14850	24874	1.700	1.740
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	4700	4653	940	990
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	750	610	1.000	1.080
MOHAMED BOTTOU, RETAILING & WHOLESALE	16000	10385	0.650	0.700
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CONSCIENCE HOTELS	11250	25455	2.280	2.260
ADAR INVEST. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	2420	8036	3.300	3.340
AMMAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	3035	3035	1.190	1.220
UNITED CO. FOR OVERSEAS LAND TRANS.	37000	84692	2.240	2.350
UKOON LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	20250	20874	990	2.040
SERVICES SECTOR	283697	496560	INDEX NUMBER: 128.63	CHANGE: +2.304
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	29572	110017	3.640	3.700
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	280	799	3.040	3.190
THE ADAR POTASH	1600	7957	4.960	5.040
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	11800	116776	9.850	10.130
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	2710	8674	3.400	3.570
THE JORDAN HOTELS HILLS	5429	26948	7.550	7.500
ADAR INTERNATIONAL MANUFACTURING	16500	75535	4.420	4.440
JORDAN OIL	2200	3080	2.550	2.550
THE PUBLIC KITCHEN	500	1800	2.750	2.800
ADAR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS INDUSTRIES	450	5108	11.000	11.350
MA'LA INDUSTRIES	8000	17320	2.150	2.100
DAR AL DAMA OVERSEAS INVESTMENT	100	777	7.400	7.770
ADAR MULTINATIONAL INVESTMENT	9500	51691	5.300	5.400
ADAR PAPER CONVERSION & TRADING	127550	76166	600	630
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRIES	1400	117300	1.440	1.460
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	12800	284	2.80	3.00
INTERMEDATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	3950	12322	1.020	1.040
JORDAN CEMENTAL INDUSTRIES	1300	8777	1.690	1.760
JORDAN CEMENTAL INDUSTRIES	350	1300	6.300	6.400
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	3150	3307	1.000	1.050
ADAR INDUSTRIES	2000	4916	2.940	3.080
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	2000	12862	4.400	4.450
JORDAN SULPHUR-CHEMICALS	2200	9298	4.040	4.200
ADAR CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	7050	9095	1.220	1.290
KANTER INVESTMENT	9776	130	1.700	1.750
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	22590	390	1.520	1.560
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	1850	13048	3.120	3.200
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	16000	1800	1.900	1.950
EL-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	12100	27588	2.270	2.280
INTERNATIONAL TOWNSHIP & CEMENTS	82100	82640	1.370	1.400
ADAR CEMENT & VERMICULITE IND. INDUSTRIES	42500	69508	1.570	1.650
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	496501	992174	INDEX NUMBER: 127.06	CHANGE: +3.467
GRAND TOTAL	1140767	2380044	INDEX NUMBER: 150.27	CHANGE: +2.081
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET: 344310				
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET: 318221				

Consumers want government intervention to curb price rises

★ ★ MANY CONSUMERS interviewed about rising prices of many products want the Ministry of Supply to intervene quickly to lay down a moderate solution to protect the consumer on one hand and, at the time, to give a reasonable profit margin to the merchant as long as it is not at the expense of the consumer. Mahmoud Al Zu'bi an employee, wants the ministry to protect the consumer from sudden price rises and to control the process by resuming imports, especially meat, for its own account. This measure, he said, will prevent certain companies from monopolising foodstuffs imports and prices. Mr. Zu'bi said he had to find an evening job to be able to provide his home with food necessities as a result of higher prices.

Nariman Al Saeed, a worker, described rising prices as "a fire that eats everything in its way." She suggested that deputies intervene to find a clear-cut solution noting that floating prices sometimes is not in the interest of consumers, especially if the number of importers is small. If competition is high among the traders then prices would drop and the consumer would have the choice to select the suitable products that suits his/her financial situation. Ms. Saeed added.

Saleh Hassan questions why the ministry does not import the necessary foodstuff on its own account. He mentioned milk, cooked cheese and meat as some of the products which consumers cannot do without. Mr. Hassan explains that the ministry can study international prices and the price rise in the country of origin and, as such, be able to confirm, whether prices had really risen and by how much in order to arrive at the right decisions that would protect the consumer. Moreover, Mr. Hassan adds, the ministry will not be obliged to agree to traders' demands except after these studies had been performed.

Um Abed Nuweish, an elderly pilgrim, said prices were compatible with income (in the past) as one dinar was enough to buy all house needs. But now, she adds, JD 10 would only buy few necessities. "A lunch, for example, would cost a minimum of between JD 2 to JD 5," Um Abed pointed out. She said the government should take charge. "When I go to the stores every day I hear of a different price and I think the merchant is cheating."

Jamal Alami, owner of a grocery, said fluctuating prices have shaken the confidence between the merchant and consumers. Mr. Alami noted that the retailer, being the link between the consumer and the distributor (importer), was more exposed to accusations of cheating in the absence of a price fixing mechanism. "How can a customer be convinced when I sold a carton of eggs for JD 1,200 and then for JD 1,500 and after that for JD 1,650," he exclaimed.

Khader Al Saleh, a retailer, said that upon bearing of a product going up in price, the demand for that product increases and supplies become short. As chaos spreads between suppliers and retailers to provide the product, importers withhold it at their storages to pressure the ministry to raise the price.

Mohammad Obeidat, head of the Consumer Protection Society, said the market had been out of control since last August. Until now, he pointed out, prices increased for many products, including 57 items which carried fixed prices from the ministry. Other products, not subject to fixed prices, went up in price by between 20 per cent and 30 per cent, he said. Dr. Obeidat stressed that there was a high degree of monopolisation in the market and urged the government to expedite putting a control mechanism by issuing a special law to protect the consumer and ban monopolisation. "What is happening now is giving protection to the traders and the industrialists at the expense of the consumers" he said (Al Dustour+Al Aswaq).

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN NOOR

AL-HUSSEIN SOCIETY

For The Physically Handicapped

Invites you to its

ANNUAL BAZAAR

at the

AMMAN MARKSOTT HOTEL

Monday, the 18th of December, '95

at 10:30 am

International bake sale

Christmas decorations

Handicrafts

Gift items

Financial Markets		
In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank		
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		
Date: 13/12/1995		
Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7090	0.7100
Swiss Franc	1.0835	1.0889
Deutsche Mark	0.4684	0.4908
Swiss Franc	0.6015	0.6045
French Franc	0.1414	0.1421
Japanese Yen	0.0057	0.0092
Dutch Guilder	0.4365	0.4387
Swedish Krona	0.0445	0.0445
Italian Lira	0.0445	0.0445
Belgian Franc	0.0445	0.0445
For All Other Currencies		
Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira	0.04375	0.04445
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	2.1932	2.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1925	0.1933
Greek Drachma	0.2345	0.3125
Cypriot Pound	1.9180	1.9870

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.		
One U.S. dollar	1.3742/52	Canadian dollar
	1.4492/02	Deutschemarks
	1.6228/38	Dutch guilders
	1.1752/62	Swiss francs
	29.80/84	Belgian francs
	5.0121/71	French francs
	1597.3/8.8	Italian lire
	101.65/75	Japanese yen
	6.7070/70	Swedish crowns
	6.4030/80	Norwegian crowns
	5.6152/25	Danish crowns
	1.4160/70	Singapore dollars
	0.7444/49	Australian dollars
	7.7343/53	Hong Kong dollars
One sterling	\$1.5366/26	
One ounce of gold	\$387.50/388.00	

DAJANI JEWELLERS

Gems of the world . All birthstones in 18 & 21 K gold . Unique designs .

Amra Hotel Shops 6th circle, Amman .

STUDIO HAIG

Professional Quality in 1 Hour Service

Develop your colour film at our shop and get:

- JUMBO photo also 30% larger
- Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm

Shmeisani - Opp. Grindlays Bank. Phone: 810605, 810609, 810620

A SECURE Hotel Sweiffyeh

Rel.O.TEL SECURITY HOSPITALITY GASTRONOMY

All Suites Hotel FLAT.O.TEL

الاجنحة الفندقية

863944 - 816690

Cheers Cafe

Hamburgers + Pizzas

ELITE CAFE' Sweiffyeh

816690

At Torino

SANABEL REAL ESTATE

FOR RENT

Deluxe Villas & Apartments in Amman

for further details please call Tel. 864230 Fax. 864231

CRYSTAL

Quality Furnished Suites

One and Two Bedrooms Reasonable Rates For Short or Long Stay

5th Circle - 692672

NEURO DOLLAR RENT A CAR

Make Car Rental Simple

Shmeisani Tel. 693399

SHENWAN GARDENS CHINESE RESTAURANT

Typical Chinese Foods

Stuffed Chinese Chicks

Open 11:30 - 2:30 & 6:30 - 11:00 pm

Take away is available

Shing Al Arab Street, Uthmaniyah Commercial Centre

Tel: 801174

Once Tasted Always Loved

Teppanyaki Sashimi Sushi

For Res. 81207 - 811119

Marina St. Droug Center

NEW YEAR IN CAIRO

Jerusalem Express Travel

Amman (Jabal) 855155 (Jerusalem) 222151

Beirut 276011, Zarg 582514, Argila 314391

SHMESANI

Live Music Nightly

Lunch & Dinner

SHMESANI TEL 680033

Shopping at AL-UM STORES

makes my Ma happy & elegant inspire of the EXTRA WEIGHT I am causing her!

Al-Um store Insurance Building Jabal Amman 3rd circle Tel: 655490

Maternity & Children's wear

Let's Share and Enjoy THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT together at JUDE CENTER

- ★ GIFTS
- ★ HOME ACCESSORIES
- ★ FURNITURE

Sweiffyeh - Behind Cairo Bank

Poliviera French Cuisine

Abdoun - Tel. 819564

Mobile Phone - (079) 29339

NOUROZ

- European Steaks & Chicken
- Middle Eastern Grills
- Pizzas & Snacks
- Hamburgers
- Maczsa, Salads
- Argola

Tel: 642830

Jabal Amman, 3rd Circle

AVIS RENT A CAR

We try harder.

Main office King Abdullah Gardens Tel. 699420

CROWN HOTEL

INDOOR HEATED SWIMMING POOL

SAUNA & JACUZZI

FITNESS ROOM

SQUASH COURT

TEL 758180

SALES OFFICE 68843 - 688157

RADIO & TV STATION RD.

ASSARAYA Rent a car

Head Office Tel. 06-584771 / Fax 684973

Aqaba Office Tel. 03-316265 / Fax 316265

Emergency Call 24 Hours 079 / 21526

Shmeisani King Abdullah Gardens

Croatians, Bosnians to battle on playing field

PARIS (R) — The World Cup draw on Tuesday set up a cut-throat battle between former world champions Italy and England and pitted three ex-Yugoslav states against each other.

The preliminary draw for a record entry of 172 teams for the 1998 finals in France took place in the majestic setting of the Louvre and organisers launched it with a film depicting the Mona Lisa lunging out of her picture frame to head a football.

But her artistic touch did no favours to her mother country with Italy drawn in an extremely tough European Group Two alongside England, Poland, Georgia and Moldova.

Although the finals have been enlarged from 24 to 32 teams for the first time, at least one of these great soccer nations could fail to qualify.

Only the winners of the nine European groups go through automatically, as well as the best second-placed team. The other eight group runners-up play off for the final four berths, a precarious procedure which could leave top teams by the wayside.

Italian coach Arrigo Sacchi said: "Our group is very hard. England and Poland are very good teams. England have strong players but I hope Italy will be stronger and finish first."

England manager Terry Venables said: "It's a tough group. They are all good sides. But we are fortunate to be in a group of five instead of six."

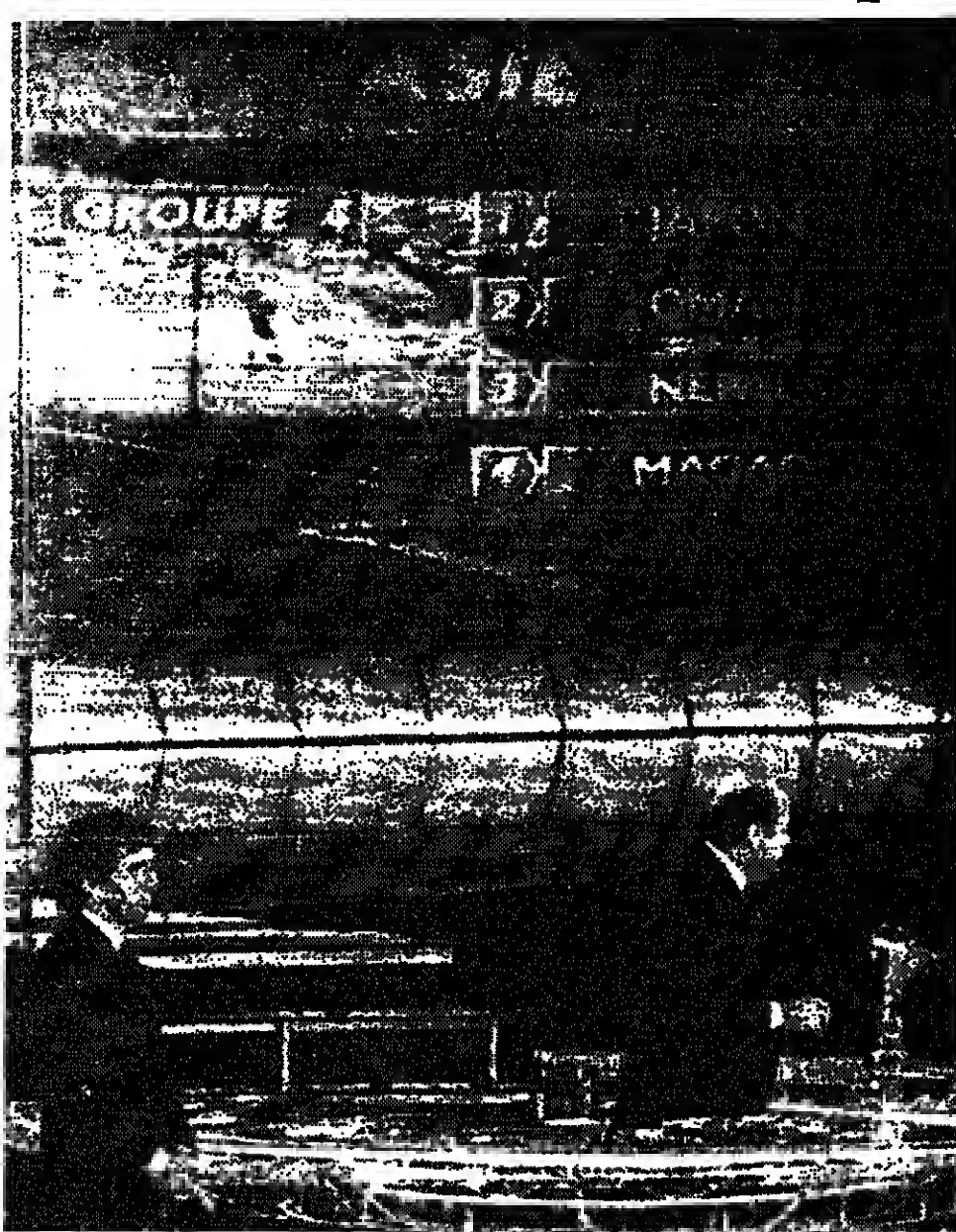
Italy, three times winners and finalists of the 1994 U.S. World Cup, and 1966 champions England met in the third place playoff at the Italian World Cup in 1990 when Italy won 1-0.

If the Italy-England pairing was a shock, the drawing of Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia together in Group One was almost dynamite so soon after the end of four years of bloody hostilities in former Yugoslavia.

But coaches and officials were anxious to look at the sporting nature of the forthcoming clashes.

Bosnian trainer Faruk Hadzibegovic said: "We're just happy to play in the World Cup. The fact that we play Croatia and Slovenia changes nothing. In fact, it's a pleasure."

"We will play with the whole Bosnian people behind us thinking only of victory and not of politics."



Sepp Blatter, the general secretary of FIFA (right), and French former soccer great Michel Platini (left), during the ceremonies of the draw for the 1998 Soccer World Cup qualifiers at the Louvre in Paris (Reuters photo)

Bosnia are not yet allowed to play matches on their territory and Hadzibegovic said their home games would take place in the Italian City of Bologna.

Marko Hlesic, vice-president of Slovenian federation said: "I don't think there will be much interference from politics in the group and we're guaranteed big crowds."

Current European champions Denmark and Greece, who qualified for the 1994 finals, are also in the same group.

The draw would have been more contentious had rump Yugoslavia ended up in the same section, but they landed in Group Six, the toughest in the entire competition with Spain, as well as ex-partners and now neighbours the Czech Republic and Slova-

kia. Germany, another three times champion, did not come away lightly in group nine where they must meet Portugal, Ukraine, Northern Ireland, Albania and Armenia.

German trainer Berti Vogts said: "This is no easy group. We know how strong Portugal and Ukraine are. But we are concentrating on next year's European Championship so we can go into the World Cup qualifiers full of self-confidence."

There was another interesting pairing in Group Seven where Dutch and Belgian neighbours, who host the 2000 European Championship together, find themselves rivals in a section which also includes Turkey and Wales.

The European groups, ex-

cluding France who qualify as hosts, inevitably dominated the draw as South America was not included. Brazil go through automatically as champions and the other nine nations have agreed to play a round-robin tournament to determine the four other teams who will join them in France.

In the other continents, the major teams were given byes in the early rounds.

The real interest in Africa, which has five places for the first time, will come in the second round when Cameroon, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco join in group action.

North and Central America have three places in the finals, as do Asia, although the Asians could earn a fourth after a playoff with the best team from Oceania.

Pele picks Brazil to repeat in '98

LONDON (AP) — Pele's pick for the 1998 World Cup? "Brazil again with my son in goal," said Pele, the only man to play on three World Cup winners. "I hope he has the same kind of luck I had."

Pele's son is 24-year-old Edinho, the keeper with the Sao Paulo-based Santos Club who is expected to be Brazil's future in the nets when the South Americans defend their title in France in two and a half years.

Brazil automatically qualified for the finals as the champions.

"He's the best goalie in Brazil," Pele added, speaking like any proud father. "But this is crazy. I don't know why he wants to play there (in goal). I used to kill the goalies."

Pele and Bobby Charlton — the leader of England's 1966 World Cup championships team — met Tuesday with reporters in a central London bar. The chaos of three-weeks of strikes kept them from attending the draw in Paris on behalf of World Cup sponsors Mastercard.

After picking Brazil to repeat, Pele sympathised with England's difficult draw in European qualifying where they are in a group with 1994 runner-up Italy and Poland. "You want England in the World Cup for their different style and their drawing (power)," Pele said.

England has stumbled recently on the world soccer stage. They failed to qualify for the finals last year in the United States and English club teams this season have taken a beating in European Cup play.

Drawing Italy won't make the rebound easy for the country that invented the game.

"I was really hoping... we'd avoid Italy or Germany," Charlton said. "This will be very difficult for England getting by Italy."

"I think we (England) have gone as low as we can in performance in Europe... We've been embarrassed recently and it's time we do something we can be proud of," Charlton added.

NBA's regular referees return; Mavericks win in overtime

DALLAS (R) — George McCloud drained four three-pointers in overtime as the Dallas Mavericks rallied for a 112-101 victory over the Seattle SuperSonics on the night the National Basketball Association's regular referees returned to work.

The sorely-missed big league refs replaced the replacements on Tuesday and received warm welcomes in 11 NBA cities before the athletes and officials resumed their traditional adversarial relationships.

"It was great to have them back," said Knicks coach Don Nelson, echoing a sentiment expressed by coaches around the league.

McCloud scored 12 of his 30 points in the extra session, including three treys in the final 70 seconds to lead the Mavs to victory after an 18-foot corner jumper by Lucious Harris at the buzzer tied the game 92-92, sending it into overtime.

Tony Dumas scored a career-high 35 points and Jason Kidd had 18 assists and 10 rebounds for the Mavericks, who erased a 17-point third-quarter deficit.

At Sacramento, a clash of division leaders turned out to be a 40-point demolition as Hakeem Olajuwon scored 31 points and grabbed 15 rebounds to lead the Houston Rockets to a 133-93 blowout of the Kings.

Houston used second-quarter runs of 10-0 and 14-0 to take control of the game. Robert Horry scored 17 of his 20 points in the third quarter as the Midwest Division-leading Rockets built the lead to 101-65 over the Pacific division leading Kings entering the final period.

At Indiana, Mark Jackson keyed a game-breaking 14-0 run in the first quarter as the Pacers ended Denver's five-game winning streak with a 125-92 rout of the Nuggets.

Antonio Davis scored 26 points and Reggie Miller added 23 for the Pacers, who never trailed after the first 74 seconds and led by as many as 36 points.

At New Jersey, Nick Anderson scored 29 points and Brian Shaw made a key three-pointer with 16 seconds to play as the Orlando Magic beat the Nets 101-97.

Penny Hardaway scored 23 points and Dennis Scott added 13 for Orlando, which won its fourth consecutive game while handing the Nets their first home loss of the season.

Kenny Anderson scored 24 points, Armon Gilliam added 17 and Jayson Williams 15 for the Nets, who hit 3-of-20 shots from the field in the fourth quarter.

In Toronto, Dee Brown scored 10 of his 20 points in the first quarter to lead the Boston Celtics to a 116-96 victory over the Raptors in the only city that has enjoyed regular NBA officiating all season because Ontario labour laws prohibit use of replacement workers in labour disputes.

Dana Barros and Dino Radja added 18 points apiece for Boston, which took control with a 14-1 first-quarter burst. Damon Stoudamire led Toronto with 18 points and nine assists.

In Atlanta, Isaiah Rider and Terry Porter scored six points apiece in the final 4:14 as the Minnesota Timberwolves held off the Hawks 85-78.

Rider scored 20 points and Christian Laettner added 18 for the Timberwolves who had never won in Atlanta before.

In Cleveland, Terrell Brandon scored 23 points and Bobby Phills added 21 to lead the Cavaliers to a 97-86 victory over the struggling Los Angeles Clippers.

The Clippers have dropped their last nine games. At Washington, Chris Webber had 25 points and 13 rebounds and Robert Pack scored four of his 23 points in the final 16 seconds as the Bulls escaped with a 108-102 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Glenn Robinson scored 30 points but missed a jumper with 37 seconds left that would have given the Bucks the lead after a 12-0 fourth-quarter Milwaukee run pulled them within one.

Pack answered with a jump shot and two free throws to make it 105-100 with 7.6 seconds remaining.

In New York, Derek Harper and Anthony Mason scored 17 points apiece to lead a balanced attack as the Knicks beat the Los Angeles Lakers 97-82 for their fourth straight victory.



NBA referee Hue Hollins gives a thumbs up prior to the start of the Washington Bullets Milwaukee Bucks game, on Tuesday Hollins made the gesture after an announcement was made that the regular referees were back to work following agreement on a new contract (Reuters photo)

NBA RESULTS

Boston	116	Toronto	96
Minnesota	85	Atlanta	78
Cleveland	97	LA Clippers	86
Indiana	125	Denver	92
Orlando	101	New Jersey	97
Washington	108	Milwaukee	102
New York	97	Lakers	82
Dallas	112	Seattle	(OT)
Charlotte	115	Phoenix	100
Golden State	105	Miami	80
Houston	133	Sacramento	93

49ers pace crowded NFL playoff chase

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — Jesse Sapolu, a Samoan blocker for reigning American football champion San Francisco, wonders why anyone thought a slow start would keep the 49ers from the National Football League playoffs.

"Can you believe people were counting us out at 5-4?" he asked. "That should be a lesson."

The 49ers have since won five games in a row and lead a pack of 18 teams battling for nine unclaimed NFL playoff berths over the final two weeks of the season. Nine

clubs have been eliminated and only Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Dallas are assured of playoff bids.

Almost every NFL game next weekend has a bearing on the playoff race, but only the most fortunate teams control their own destiny.

San Francisco can claim home-field advantage up to the Super Bowl by winning their final two games against Minnesota and Atlanta, two 8-6 clubs chasing playoff spots. A loss and Dallas would regain the edge.

"Everybody is saying the 49ers are in position to get

home-field advantage and all these other grandiose things we haven't accomplished yet," 49ers' coach George Seifert said.

"We haven't even made the playoffs yet. We have a tough team coming up and then we travel to Atlanta. I hate to sound like an old coach, but I'm getting to be an old coach."

In the National Conference, the 49ers are all but assured of a playoff bid while Philadelphia needs a victory over either Arizona or Chicago to seal a playoff spot. Atlanta clinches with a victory and a loss by either Detroit or Minnesota.

Green Bay needs a victory and Detroit defeat to seal a playoff spot while Detroit needs a victory plus losses by Minnesota and St. Louis.

Villeneuve impressive for Williams-Renault

JACQUES VILLENEUVE stole Ferrari debutant Michael Schumacher's thunder last week when he emerged fastest from a fascinating new-boy head-to-head in Portugal.

The 24-year-old IndyCar champion's lap of 1m 20.94s in the Williams-Renault FW17 beat Schumacher's best time in the Ferrari V12 by 0.3s. The French-Canadian was just 0.039s slower than new teammate Damon Hill's best lap in qualifying for the Portuguese Grand Prix at the same Estoril track in September. But nearly 0.4s behind David Coulthard's pole position time.

Villeneuve, who suffered a rare Renault engine failure and a gearbox problem in the course of his four-day test, is pleased with the preparation for his F1 debut in 1996. Everything has been going

well. "We have made some good progress," he said.

But inevitably the attention was focused on Schumacher's debut with Ferrari, as well as Jean Alesi and Gerhard Berger's first runs in the Benetton.

Schumacher was particularly impressed with the V12 engine, which will be replaced next season by a new V10. The Double World Champion said that the V12 was as good in many ways as the much lauded Renault V10.

After spending some time adapting the Ferrari 412T2 to his driving style, he said he also liked the car's forgiving handling, saying it was better in fast corners than the Benetton. He was the only driver significantly to improve the times a car had managed in the GP, lapping an impressive 0.7s quicker than Berger's best time for Ferrari.

Although winter times at Estoril are often quicker than those at the GP, none of the drivers at the test went for low-fuel qualifying-type laps. If they had, said Benetton technical director Ross Brawn, a high 1m 19s may have been possible.

Wanted Immediately for Real Estate

1. Deluxe furnished four bedrooms + maid's room. Apt. or floor in Shmeisani or Abdoun only.
2. Unfurnished villa must be on a hilly and wide open area. Please call only if you have exactly the required.

Telefax: 662386

TWO FURNISHED APARTMENTS FOR RENT

Each consists of three bedroom, salon, dining, sitting, with independent central heating. The first is located in Um Uthaina, near the market and the second in Sweihah, behind Olympia Hotel. Can be furnished according to tenant's taste.

Please call Tel: 865427.

Ministry of Education CALL FOR TENDER

The Ministry of Education call upon the interested companies and establishments specialised in the field of computer, and interested to participate in the tender for establishing Information Internet in the Centre of the Ministry of Education to link it with other Directorates inside the Kingdom, financed through the Second Sector Project for Educational Development.

Interested bidder's are invited to collect tender's documents from Furniture and Equipment Division starting December 11/1995 against the payment of (JD500) for each copy.

You are kindly requested to bring a valid professional license.

Note: "The last date for selling the copies of the bid will be 28/12/1995"

*Closing date will be 11.00 a.m. Jan/15/1996.

*The expenses of the announcement will be paid by the awarded bidder.

Head of Special Tender's Committee

Telecommunications Corporation Announcement Regarding an Amendment to Tender 79/95 "Procurement of Integrated Software & Hardware Solution for the Telecommunications Corporation Core Operations"

The Telecommunications Corporation of Jordan announces an amendment to dates of certain events for tender No. 79/95 as follows:

Event	Old Date	Amended Date
1- Date and time for bidders conference	Thursday 21, December 1995, 10 a.m.	Thursday 18, Jan. 1996, 10 a.m.
2- Date and time for site visit	Wednesday 20, December 1995, 7:30 a.m.	Wednesday 17, Jan. 1996, 7:30 a.m.
3- Deadline for first stage submission	Thursday 4, January 1996, 12 noon	Sunday 4, February 1996, 12 noon

Bidders are also informed that TCC shall not consider any further requests for extension of these dates.

Director General Eng. Walid Dweik

The Office of the Coordinator UNRWA Headquarters Amman P.O. Box 140157 (Wadi Seer) Amman 11814 Jordan

Full consideration will be given to disabled candidates whose disability does not mitigate against the effective performance of the duties of the job. UNRWA welcomes applications equally from men and women. Priority will be given to fully qualified registered Palestinians.

Maradona cleared of drug charges, threatens to quit Boca Juniors

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Diego Maradona threatened to quit his Argentine club Boca Juniors on Tuesday if they hired former national coach Carlos Bilardo.

Earlier in the day in Rome, a court cleared Maradona of involvement in drug-trafficking.

Boca president Mauricio Macri wants Bilardo to replace Silvio Marzolini after the team squandered a six-point lead to crash out of the league title race.

"If Bilardo is the new coach, then I'm out," Maradona told Argentine radio from Chile where Boca were playing a friendly.

Maradona clashed with Bilardo in 1993, shouting insults before television cameras after his then coach at Seville in Spain substituted him during a game.

Maradona's agent said the Argentinean was considering offers to play for a Japanese and a Greek club next year. Maradona signed for Boca in July for more than \$9 million to play until December, 1997, after returning from a 15-month suspension for taking drugs.

But a 6-4 defeat by Racing Club last week effectively cost Boca any hope of the league title.

Maradona was cleared of involvement in drug-trafficking by a Rome court when the prosecution asked that charges be dropped because there was no corroborating evidence.

The charges had been levelled against Maradona, who played for Napoli until 1991, by his former bodyguard, Pietro Pugliese, who said he had unwittingly sup-

plied the player with three kilos of cocaine in 1989.

Pugliese said the drugs were concealed in a package of newspapers he was asked to deliver to Maradona. Pugliese claimed that Maradona had contacts with the Camorra, the Neapolitan version of the Mafia.

Pugliese changed his version of events several times during the trial.

The prosecution said it was studying the possibility of pressing charges against Pugliese for slander.

Maradona was given a 14-month suspended sentence for cocaine possession by a Naples court in September 1991.

The Argentine was banned from soccer for 15 months in 1991 after testing positive for cocaine while playing with Napoli.

NY Yankee caps, but not baseball, popular in Thailand

CHIANG MAI, Thailand (AP) — They don't know a stolen base from a stolen hubcap, the World Series from the World Trade Centre. But one of the most popular hats among spectators at the 18th southeast Asian games is the New York Yankees baseball cap.

"I like this hat because it's becoming hip now and it reminds me of rap music," said Nongluck Kitipatratol, 22, who was wearing a Yankees cap while waiting near the games main stadium.

Even some of the Russian coaches imported by Thailand to help its teams capture gold medals at the Olympic-style competition, were caught wearing Yankee caps.

"I bought this hat because I got a discount, and because many of my athletes wear it," said Alim Achmedjanov, a coach for the Thai track team.

"We don't understand baseball in Russia," Achmedjanov said. "In Russia the most popular sport now is making money."

Yankee caps can be spotted in rapidly modernizing Bangkok, the nation's capital, and here in Chiang Mai at the foothills of the Himalayas where hill tribe people still wear colourful and distinctive clothes that haven't changed in centuries.

"I saw baseball once on television," said 13-year-old Nitikorn Pitonmanit, who was sporting a Yankee cap to the Thailand-Vietnam soccer match. "I don't remember the names of the teams, but I think the game could be popular in Thailand if they came here."

Despite the cap's popularity, Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, who has demanded financial concessions from New York City while threatening to move the team, isn't making a dime off this deal.

They're all fakes. Thailand was recently removed from the United States government's watchlist of countries that violate intellectual property laws. But pirated cassette tapes, movies and knockoffs of designer fashions can still be easily found and cheaply bought.

NBC to pay \$2.3 billion for U.S. Olympics rights

NEW YORK (AFP) — International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials have traded 21st Century profits for a larger share in a guaranteed \$2.3 billion television deal that could squeeze future Olympic organisers.

The IOC has sold United States television rights for the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics and the 2006 Winter Games to NBC, officials revealed Tuesday in an unprecedented deal that comes before those host cities have been determined.

NBC will spend \$793 million for the 2004 event, \$613 million for the 2006 Winter Games and \$894 million for the 2008 Olympics, said Dick Pound, the International Olympic Committee chairman from Canada.

"We're more than willing to trade a portion of expected inflation for the stability and predictability of our revenue stream," Pound said. "The amount we have traded is 50 per cent of our revenue stream."

The IOC will split television profits 50-50 with NBC on the deal and pass along only 49 per cent of the income to organisers of the actual events, down from the 60 per cent now given stages of the actual Games.

"We just felt, with enough advance notice, we would make a change that would balance the organisational side of the Olympic movement," Pound said. "The costs of athletes and international federations are rising and now bidding cities will know how much they are getting up front."

Future Olympic bidders can be fairly certain the amount is less than available under the current system. But they will never know how much money might have been available from bidding wars. No other U.S. network was involved in talks for these rights, another Olympic first.

"We have a very high degree of confidence in the relationship we have developed with NBC," Pound said. "We thought the opportunities presented us were enough for us not to put it up to an auction situation."

The IOC will receive payments from NBC on a typical schedule, allowing budget certainty that will outlast re-

ing IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, yet limit the impact his successor can make in his first years.

"President Samaranch was very happy with this significant moment in this history of the Olympic movement," IOC secretary general Francois Carrard said. "We're all very very excited at the headquarters."

NBC paid \$1.35 billion in August for U.S. rights to the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. The overwhelming and unprecedented double bid effectively slammed the door on all rivals, as does this new pact.

Dick Ebersol, president of NBC sports, said he sensed a chance at a long-term deal after agreeing to terms for 2000 and 2002. He made a pitch in September when signing final contracts and worked out details in a November 20 meeting at Montreal. The IOC approved the deal last week at a meeting in Japan.

"To know for 10 years we're the network of the Olympics is a wonderful thing," Ebersol said.

NBC's deal included \$705 million for Sydney and \$545 million for the U.S.-based Winter Games. Both were record payouts for the lucrative U.S. television contracts.

Fees for the new deal were determined by factoring a three per cent inflation rate through each year, with original base figures stemming from the Sydney and Salt Lake City deals.

"It clearly provides considerable financial security to the movement and to future cities bidding for the Games knowing they have the financing locked up," IOC marketing director Michael Payne said.



German soccer star Jurgen Klinsman scheduled to meet a South African side in Johannesburg on Friday (Reuters photo)

Puerto Rico launches Olympic bid

SAN JUAN (AFP) — Puerto Rican officials will meet with International Olympic Committee officials next week to make a bid for hosting the 2004 Summer Games, organisers of the bid group confirmed here Tuesday.

"We have put a lot of work into this and if we didn't think it had a chance we wouldn't be going to Switzerland to present it," said Marimer Olazagasti, president of the organising committee.

San Juan proposes to rent cruise ships for housing to meet an Olympic requirement of 30,000 hotel rooms. There are only about 12,300 rooms available.

Also in the financing stages are four very crucial pieces of the Olympic puzzle — two main stadiums, a swimming facility and an athletes' village.

Puerto Rico is expected to compete against Rome; Lille, France; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Seville, Spain; St. Petersburg, Russia; Istanbul, Turkey; Copenhagen, Denmark and Cape Town, South Africa.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMAR HIRSCH

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DEFENSE

Both vulnerable East deals.

NORTH

4 J 6

Q J 8 2

7 4 3 2

8 5 2

WEST

A 10 5 2

Q A 8 7 4

Q J 10 8

4 10 7

EAST

A K 9 8 4

Q J 10 8 3

Q A K 5

4 8 2

SOUTH

A 4 7

Q 9

Q 8 6

A K Q J 4 8

The bidding:

EAST SOUTH WEST NORTH

10 3NT Pass Pass

Opening lead: Four of ♠

Winning defense doesn't necessarily require some spectacular coup. What appeals to us about this hand is its simplicity. It was played some years ago in the World Team Championship. Sitting East was Elmer Hiss of Taiwan.

Three no trump is a reasonable shot with the South hand. In view of the opening bid by East, 11 tricks

were almost certainly out of reach, but there had to be some play for nine tricks.

West led a low heart and declarer, not surprisingly, misguessed by calling for the table's jack, losing to East's queen. It might seem that a heart return was automatic, but that would have given declarer nine tricks — two spades with the help of a finesse, one heart and six clubs.

After playing off two rounds of clubs, the third club in dummy would be the entry to cash the heart and take the spade finesse.

East decided that South probably held the ace and queen of spades and the guarded queen of diamonds and a running club suit, so Hiss chose to adopt a passive defense. East shifted to a club.

Declarer did the best possible by winning the first club and cashing another high club, setting up dummy's club nine as an entry. That made the spade finesse possible, but when East covered the jack of spades declarer still had only eight tricks — two spades and six clubs.

It took no more than routine care by the defenders, as declarer ran off three more club tricks, to make sure that no ninth trick materialized.

CHRISTMAS special event S



Jordan River Designs
present a sumptuous food assortment of
Gift Baskets
for this festive event.
Five different combinations
are available to suit every appetite.

New Lines have been created to provide you
with something different to present, varying from
personalised gifts to home furnishings.

Special opening hours

9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

15, 16 & 17 December

22, 23 & 24 December

For more information, please call
Jordan River Designs at 613081 / 613082.



LITTLE HEARTS
JOYFULLY PRESENT
NATALYS
CHRISTMAS COLLECTION
Children's Wear 0-6 years
& Maternity clothing.
MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR
RABIA AREA AL-AZZAM COMMERCIAL CENTER

INTER-CONTINENTAL JORDAN
Christmas Tree Lighting
14th of Dec
The festivities
feature all your favourite
children choir singing
Christmas Carols, a giant Ginger
Bread House and a special
appearance by Santa himself.
Glühwein, hot chocolate,
pudding, minced pies and many
other goodies will be offered.
See you all at the lobby from
4:00pm ~ 5:30pm.

DESIGNED BY ISS TEL 882851

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL: 634144
PHILADELPHIA

Kevin Costner
in
WATERWORLD

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45

CINEMA TEL: 699238
PLAZA

Nadia Al Jundi, Farouq Fishawi
and Mahmoud Hamdeh
in
**A Woman Who shook
the Throne of Egypt**
(Arabic)

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 677420
CONCORD

CONCORD "1"
Jacques Nicklson
& Michel Feiffer...in
WOLF
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
Sylvester Stallone...in
ASSASSINS

Shows: 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:15

AMMOUN THEATRE
TEL: 618274 - 618275

MUSA HIJAZIN
"Sumaa"
in
Hi Citizen
daily at 8:30 p.m.
Written & directed by
Mohammad Shawaqfeh

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155

Shows begin on Dec. 19, 1995 and
continue on Tuesdays, Wednesdays
and Thursdays (three days a week)
only. The programme continues
until the start of the holy month of
Ramadan. The Show is entitled:
"Ahlan Tatbie"
Welcome Normalisation

For reservation call 625155

Chirac behind embattled Juppe as strike grinds on

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac reaffirmed Wednesday his faith in Prime Minister Alain Juppe as France's strike crisis neared the end of a third week, increasingly threatening the future of the embattled premier.

Speaking the morning after up to two million people took to the streets in the biggest display of anti-government anger yet, Mr. Chirac told a cabinet meeting there was "no alternative" to the welfare reforms at the root of the crisis.

"I have confidence in the government to implement this policy simply because there is no other," he said, in comments reported by government spokesman Alain Lamassouire after a cabinet meeting.

"We were not elected to organise France's decline. We must stay on course," he added in one of his few public comments on the strike, which has escalated into France's worst social crisis since the May 1968 student revolts.

The 20-day old crisis, and particularly signs that Mr. Juppe was making concessions, hit the French franc Wednesday morning. It fell sharply in initial trading to 3,455 to the mark from 3,448 late Tuesday.

This was not helped by a union call for a new day of national protests Saturday, which will be the seventh such day if it goes ahead. Turnout at such protests has escalated continuously since the strikes began on Nov. 24.

Trains, buses and metros remained at a standstill Wednesday. Airline services, severely hit by an air traffic controllers' strike on Tuesday, are set to be disrupted again by a 24-hour strike call for Friday.

Unconfirmed reports said

that railmen and train drivers in the Paris metro had voted Wednesday to continue the strike. But union sources said the votes were not unanimous.

Mr. Chirac also said that criticisms by members of his own neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) party of the Maastricht criteria for the single European currency in 1999 were "unfounded." Mr. Juppe must cut public deficits, including those of the railways and social security, to three per cent of GNP by 1997, to meet the criteria.

Mr. Chirac said the choice was "not between Europe and job creation," but between "deficits and job creation."

"We must become serious again," Mr. Chirac said. "We cannot spend more than we earn indefinitely."

The French press pointed out that Tuesday's nationwide protests, which saw a record turnout on the streets, were a stark rejection of concession Mr. Juppe offered Monday over his plan to reform the welfare system.

"The streets vote no confidence in Juppe," ran the headline in daily Liberation, referring to a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly Tuesday night which the premier won easily due to his right-wing majority's crushing 80 per cent of seats in parliament.

Mr. Juppe also remained firm Wednesday, telling ministers that "the conflict is being politicised" and repeating there was "no longer any reason for the strike" because of his concessions on railworkers' special pension scheme and freeze on a five-year restructuring plan for the debt-ridden SNCF railway company.

The developments came amid increasing speculation

about Mr. Juppe's political future as the crisis, sparked by his plans to reform France's debt-ridden social security system, continued for its 20th day.

The Gaullist premier, who has plumbed the depths of unpopularity since coming to power six months ago, has suffered increasing sniping from within his own political grouping.

The respected daily Le Monde said in an editorial this week that talks with unions were his "last chance" to resolve the crisis. The talks Monday were manifestly rebuffed by Tuesday's day of mass protests.

Despite the climbdown by Mr. Juppe Monday, two of the three main French unions vowed to continue to fight his plans to reform the country's generous but heavily indebted welfare system and health service.

But the umbrella national teachers union, FEN, late Tuesday called for an end to the strikes after receiving a letter signed by a Juppe aide saying that pensions would remain unchanged.

Ministers rallied round Mr. Juppe Wednesday. Defence Minister Charles Millon said on French radio that "we should not substitute a parliamentary democracy with a democracy of demonstrations."

The social security system has an accumulated deficit of 230 billion francs (\$46 billion) and the SNCF one of 175 billion francs (\$35 billion).

The trade union turnout figure saying two million people were on the streets — although likely to be contested — is poignant for Mr. Juppe. He said in a much-quoted newspaper interview last month that if two million people took the streets of France in protest, "my government will not survive."



DISSIDENT TRIED: China's most prominent dissident Wei Jingsheng (right) talks to his two lawyers (left) who entered a plea of not guilty on Mr. Wei's behalf during a secretive trial in Beijing. The court took only five hours to sentence to 14 years in prison for conspiring to subvert the communist government. The court also ordered Mr. Wei deprived of his political rights for three years (see inside) (AFP photo)

Release of Hamas activist clears Cairo talks hurdle

GAZA CITY (AP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) released a leading Islamic militant Tuesday, smoothing the way for an agreement with the Hamas movement that Yasser Arafat hopes will ultimately halt attacks on Israel.

Sayed Abu Musameh, editor of the Hamas weekly Al Watan, was sentenced in May to two years in prison for incitement against the PNA.

Negotiations between Hamas and the PNA scheduled for last month were delayed after Mr. Arafat refused to release Mr. Abu Musameh, who is also a top Hamas negotiator.

On Tuesday Mr. Abu Musameh was freed, becoming the first militant sentenced by a Palestinian state security court to be released before completing his jail sentence.

"I hope that we will be able

to overcome all the obstacles," Mr. Abu Musameh told reporters. "The important thing is to work and to push to achieve this reconciliation."

The release could set the stage for revoking the sentences of other jailed militants once agreement is reached between the PNA and its opponents.

Under an emerging agreement, Hamas would pledge to refrain from attacks against Israel and join in the Palestinian democratic process.

Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad have carried out suicide bombings that have killed more than 130 Israelis since the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord was signed in 1993.

Israel has warned Mr. Arafat that it will halt the peace process unless the violence

stops.

Mahmoud Zahar, a prominent Hamas negotiator, said eight members of the group from the West Bank and Gaza planned to hold a strategy meeting in Sudan on Thursday and hoped to "reach a common understanding with our colleagues from Hamas abroad about every step and detail of our agreement with the Palestinian authority."

The group will then return Saturday to Cairo, which has offered to host Hamas-PLO talks, and begin discussions with Mr. Arafat and his representatives.

Mr. Arafat told reporters Tuesday he was closely following the dialogue. "The most important thing is that dialogue with Hamas and all the opposition is going on, and I am in permanent contact with all the opposition," he said.

Video of Rabin shooting is kept away from public eye

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — A videotape that officials say clearly shows the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin will not be made public at least while a commission of inquiry into the killing continues its work, a justice ministry spokeswoman said Wednesday.

The tape will afterward be handed to state prosecutors for possible use as evidence in the trial of Yigal Amir, the 25-year-old ultranationalist who killed Mr. Rabin on Nov. 4. The trial is set to begin Dec. 19.

But even then the video may be kept from the public, said Orit Shemesh, a justice ministry spokeswoman.

Mr. Shemesh said the footage "clearly shows the assassination."

It was filmed by a unnamed man who stood among hundreds of Rabin supporters on a shopping centre roof overlooking the parking lot where the premier was shot as he was about to enter his car to leave a peace rally in Tel Aviv.

The only images of assassination made public so far are still photographs in which only Mr. Rabin's heels are visible as he lies beside his car amid gunned security men. Video footage of the shooting could provide valuable insight into how Amir was able to evade security measures and shoot Mr. Rabin twice at

pointblank.

Israel Radio said the commission received the tape in the days after the killing but kept it from the public out of consideration for the feelings of Mr. Rabin's family. Meir Shargor, a former chief justice who heads the commission, was a close friend of Mr. Rabin's.

Army radio urged the anonymous cameraman to call the station.

Meanwhile, a student who was standing next to Mr. Rabin when he was shot, said he was allowed to approach the late premier without a security check.

Mordy Yisrael, a communications student, said police let him and a man collecting autographs into the area near Mr. Rabin's car.

"I tried to interview Rabin, but he didn't answer me," Yisrael told army radio.

"I heard a shot, turned around and saw the flash of two more shots. I was sure I had the gunfire on tape, but it seems someone pulled out my microphone so it simply didn't record it," he added.

The video film turned over about a month ago to the commission, clearly shows the faces of both Mr. Rabin and Amir at the moment of the shooting, Israel Radio said it is possible to read Mr. Rabin's expression as he was

hit by the two bullets which killed him.

Only a few people have been permitted to view the video and the radio said most of them were moved to tears by the scene.

The commission has asked the public prosecutor's office to decide if the film should be submitted as evidence at Amir's trial, scheduled to begin Tuesday, the radio said.

Amir is a radical nationalist opposed to the Rabin government's policy of returning Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank to the Palestinians.

The security forces charged with protecting Mr. Rabin came under intense criticism for failing to prevent Amir from walking up to the prime minister and shooting him at point-blank range as he left the rally and the video is expected to help determine why security broke down.

The very existence of the video is a further embarrassment to the security services since ballistics experts said the photographer's presence on the nearby rooftop showed that someone armed with a rifle and telescopic sight also could have shot Mr. Rabin with relative ease.

The commission visited the Tel Aviv site of the slaying late Tuesday as part of its ongoing investigation.

British citizen held in Egypt as Jihad leader

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt arrested a naturalised British citizen in a sweep against the Jihad extremist group which netted 54 militants and left two others dead, the Interior Ministry said on Wednesday.

Akram Abdul Aziz Mahmoud Al Sherif, an Egyptian with British citizenship, was one of the leaders of a Jihad cell planning "suicide attacks" in Egypt which also included five Sudanese, the ministry said in a statement.

Cairo has increasingly accused Britain of harbouring extremist leaders masterminding a violent campaign against the Egyptian government, but this was the first arrest of a British citizen in raids on militants.

Sherif, who worked as a taxi driver in Britain and was married to a British woman, was "closely connected" to Adel Abdul Bari, a Jihad mastermind who Egypt says has political asylum in Britain.

The ministry said Sherif had received "organisational training" in Britain.

In the sweep of their hideouts across Egypt over the past week, two other Jihad leaders were killed, Mahmoud Al Sayed Shaaban Al Dib and Nabil Abdul Rahman Rizq, the ministry said.

The five Sudanese were captured in a raid on their hideout in the southern city of Aswan, police sources said. Other arrests took place in the Mediterranean port of Alexandria and near Cairo.

Police found weapons caches, an explosives factory and £25,000 (around \$37,500), \$3000 and around \$15,000 worth of Egyptian pounds in the Jihad hideouts, the ministry said.

It said the group was part of a Jihad "conspiracy" stretching from London to Sudan to conduct "suicide attacks against figures and institutions" in Egypt.

The London-based Jihad leadership "selected highly-trained cadres to join militant camps in Sudan" from where they infiltrated into Egypt to coordinate with cells there, it said.

The ministry said its security services "have monitored the London-based leadership's insistent continuation of terrorist movement to stir up unrest" in Egypt.

Dib and Rizq, who received military training in Afghanistan and were already wanted for carrying out "a number of terrorist attacks" in Egypt, were both killed in shootouts as they tried to escape police, the ministry said.

Their deaths brought to 925 dead the number killed since March 1992 in a violent militant campaign to overthrow the Egyptian government.

Cairo has repeatedly accused Sudan's government of backing militant groups in Egypt, but in the past month it has also criticised Britain for not acting against extremists living on its soil.

Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi said last month that "terrorists are active on British soil where they hold meetings and give orders for missions. All the attacks have been planned from outside" Egypt.



Mandela gets his boots back — 34 years later

PRETORIA (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela Tuesday recovered a pair of boots he left at the home of a friend in Tanzania nearly 34 years ago. "I hope they still fit," Mr. Mandela said as he took possession of the brown combat boots from Vicky Swai, widow of Tanganyika's former communications and industry minister, Nsilo Swai. A spokesman for Mr. Mandela said the president had stayed at the Swai home in what was then Tanganyika when he was in the country to set up bases for his African National Congress' armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe. "They remind me of the old days as a soldier," Mr. Mandela said. He recalled that he had left the boots behind in January 1962, "the day Julius Nyerere resigned as prime minister" following the independence from Britain on Dec. 9, 1961, of Tanganyika, which later merged with Zanzibar to form present-day Tanzania. Vicky Swai said her husband, who was named Tanganyika's U.N. representative in 1962, took the boots with him to New York in hopes of giving them back to Mr. Mandela, who was arrested shortly after his return to South Africa. She said her husband died last year, leaving instructions in his will for the boots to be returned to Mr. Mandela. "My husband looked at these boots as a source of strength," the South African news agency quoted her as saying.

Spanish TV show to run non-stop for a week

MADRID (R) — A small Spanish television station is hoping to set a world record for the longest continuous broadcast with a current affairs programme lasting 177 hours. Two presenters will front the marathon seven-day show, which is due to start at midnight on Jan. 3. Telemadrono Managing Director Juan Jose Fernandez said Tuesday. They are undergoing medical and psychological checks to make sure they last the course even if their audience does not. The station hopes to gain entry into the Guinness Book of World Records which currently has no listing in this category.

Hamster given free bus travel pass

BERMINGHAM, England (AFP) — A British hamster has been given a free bus pass as compensation after travel chiefs here apologised Tuesday to the animal's schoolboy owner for having charged him to take it to school on a bus. Wayne Bass, 11, had taken Sweep the hamster home for the weekend from his school in this central English city and was returning it Monday morning when a bus driver insisted he pay for the animal. The management of the city's bus company apologised for being overzealous and visited Wayne's school Wednesday to present the hamster with a pass that will allow it to travel free of charge on buses. "Animal travel is at the discretion of the driver but clearly it does seem a bit silly to charge for a hamster that is clearly

Malaysia confirms arrest of suspect in New York bombing

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Malaysian police Wednesday confirmed that a new suspect in the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Centre was arrested here before being extradited to New York.

Police Superintendent Gbazali Mohammad Amin confirmed the arrest of Wali Khan Amin Shah here, but would not give details.

"Malaysian police cannot release details yet. It is highly confidential," Mr. Gbazali told AFP, adding that more information would be released in the next few days.

Reports from New York said the suspect, Wali Khan, was indicted there Tuesday in connection with the Feb. 26, 1993 blast, which killed six people and injured 1,000.

The reports said Wali Khan was allegedly linked to Ramzi Yousef, who is also awaiting trial in connection with the bombing of the New York landmark.

The new suspect is also alleged to have taken part in

a Philippines Airlines blast last December which killed a Japanese man and injured 10 others during a flight between Tokyo and Manila.

Yousef, also linked to the Dec. 11 plane attack, was arrested in Pakistan in February before being brought to the United States.

Four men convicted in the World Trade Centre blast — Mohammad Salameh, Nidal Ayyad, Mahmoud Abouhalima and Ahmad Ajaj — were each sentenced in May 1994 to 240 years in prison.

Another suspect Iyad Mahmoud Ismail Najem, 26, was extradited from Jordan to the United States on August 3.

The trade centre bombing, according to the United States government, was part of a conspiracy to launch an urban war against the U.S. Egyptian cleric Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman and nine others were convicted Oct. 1 for plotting to bomb New York landmarks and kill political figures.

Sudan reports 70,000 expellees from Libya have returned home

KHARTOUM (AP) — Libya has expelled at least 70,000 Sudanese workers since the summer, and Sudanese officials expect 230,000 others to cross the border by February.

As many as 15 trucks a day are arriving at the Sudanese border town of Wahat Al Salafi after a 1,300-kilometre trek across mostly desert terrain, said Tajeddin Al Mahdi, a Sudanese official in charge of repatriating the workers.

Libya began expelling Sudanese and Egyptian workers in the summer, saying they did not have valid work permits. Thousands of Egyptians have also returned, but there are no firm numbers.

The Sudanese, however, appear to be bearing the brunt of the expulsions, possibly because of Libyan suspicions that the Sudanese government was involved in clashes with militants in Libya.

Western analysts have also suggested that U.N. sanctions imposed in 1992 have hurt the economy, prompting the denigrations.

Al Mahdi told Sudanese newspapers Wednesday that the lack of trucks and cars meant it would take until February.

Only 300 Libyan trucks and buses are carrying the workers from Libya to Wahat Al Salafi, he said.

At least five people have died en route to Sudan, Mr. Mahdi said. Sudanese returning from Libya have complained they had barely enough food and water to make the gruelling, two-week journey.

'Expelled not related to Kaddoumi'

The family of a top Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official, Farouk Kaddoumi, denied a report from Cairo on Tuesday that an elderly Palestinian expelled from Egypt was his uncle.

The family in Tunis where the PLO official is based said that Rassem Halim Kaddoumi, 75, had no ties to them.

Earlier in Cairo, a U.N. refugee official said he was an uncle and was being deported

Algerian journalists sentenced

ALGIERS (AFP) — An Algiers court on Wednesday gave suspended jail sentences to the managing editor and a journalist on the private daily Liberte, after convicting them of libel, sources at the newspaper said.

The managing editor, Abrous Outoudert, received a four-month sentence and the journalist, Samir Knaeyez, a two-month term. They had been charged with "repeated publication of libellous news."

Mr. Outoudert was arrested at the Algiers airport on Sunday as he was leaving for Paris to receive a prize on Wednesday at the headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Mr. Knaeyez was detained on Monday.

Last week, Liberte reported the probable appointment of an advisor to President Liamine Zeroul, retired General Mohammed Betchine, as defence minister. The article contained errors about Gen. Betchine's career.

The court accused the newspaper of a "wilful desire to publish false news of a nature to undermine respect and consideration for others," but the Algerian association of newspaper editors earlier called the charges "arbitrary."

The authorities have also suspended publication of Liberte, the widest-circulation daily in French.

U.S. Army tries to fether out extremists from its ranks

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. Army has launched vast investigation on the possible presence of neo-Nazis in its ranks, following the murder of a black couple by two soldiers from a North Carolina base.

The crime led to the discovery of extremist groups at U.S. military bases, especially in Germany.

Suspicious that some U.S. soldiers had their own hidden agenda followed the April 19 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that killed 169 people and injured 500 others.

Americans were surprised to discover that the two chief suspects in the bombing, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, were former servicemen from Fort Riley, Kansas — McVeigh is a Gulf war

Fayetteville, North Carolina, where Michael James, 36, and Jackie Burden, 27, were shot in the back at point blank range as they were strolling down a street.

The victims were both black. They were unknown to the two suspects in the shooting, members of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg who had never concealed their hate for all non-whites.

One of the suspects, James Burmeister, 20, collects Nazi flags and swastikas. Several soldiers who knew him have recounted hearing him criticise current anti-discrimination laws as a "cancer."

Burmeister was a regular at local skinhead bars and was frequently seen in the company of 21-year-old Malcolm

his two companions to the scene of the crime, is charged with conspiracy to commit murder.

Fort Bragg spokesman Major Rivers Johnson said that despite the racist aspect of the crime "there is nothing to indicate that we have a major race problem in the 82nd Airborne."

The Anti-Defamation League, a U.S. group against all forms of racial prejudice, has pointed out that "there have been several episodes in which the military has been the target of recruitment efforts by hate groups," but that "military officials have acted swiftly and responsibly to curb such activities."

But Secretary of the Army Togo West, who is black, announced Tuesday that an investigation was being laun-

trated by racists and hate groups.

The investigators are expected to make their recommendations March 1.

"We will look to see whether in fact this incident suggests membership in an extremist organisation that is active... in ways that undermine our basic values," Mr. West said, adding that soldiers are called on to protect and not threaten their fellow citizens.

Quoting an internal report by the army, the Newsweek weekly said in its late issue that some U.S. soldiers based at Wildflecken, Germany, had formed a hate group targeting blacks.

At Fort Carson, in Colorado, some soldiers have joined skinhead groups and a few of them are suspected of steal-